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LIBERTY OF SLAVERY

PRIZE ESSAYS



Horace and Edith King Davis
Memorial Fund





Liberty or Slavery ; the Great National Question.

THREE PRIZE ESSAYS

ON

AMERICAN SLAVERY.

"THE TRUTH IN LOVE."

BOSTON :
CONGREGATIONAL BOARD OF PUBLICATION.
1857.

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PREMIUM OFFERED.

A BENEVOLENT individual, who has numerous friends and acquaintances both North and South, and who has had peculiar opportunities for learning the state and condition of all sections of the nation, perceiving the danger of our national Institutions, and deeply impressed with a sense of the importance, in this time of peril, of harmonizing Christian men through the country, by kind yet faithful exhibitions of truth on the subject now agitating the whole community, offered a premium of \$100 for the best Essay on the subject of Slavery, fitted to influence the great body of Christians through the land.

The call was soon responded to by nearly fifty writers, whose manuscripts were examined by the distinguished committee appointed by the Donor, whose award has been made, as their certificate, here annexed, will show.

PREMIUM AWARDED.

THE undersigned, appointed a Committee to award a premium of one hundred dollars, offered by a benevolent individual, for the best Essay on the subject of Slavery, "adapted

to receive the approbation of Evangelical Christians generally," have had under examination more than forty competing manuscripts, a large number of them written with much ability. They have decided to award the prize to the author of the Essay entitled, "*The Error and the Duty in regard to Slavery*," whom they find, on opening the accompanying envelope, to be the Rev. R. B. THURSTON, of Chicopee Falls, Mass.

They would also commend to the attention of the public, two of the remaining tracts, selected by the individual who offered the prize, and for which he and others interested have given a prize of one hundred dollars each. One of these is entitled, "*Friendly Letters to a Christian Slaveholder*," by Rev. A. C. BALDWIN, of Durham, Conn.; the other, "*Is American Slavery an Institution which Christianity sanctions and will perpetuate?*" by Rev. TIMOTHY WILLISTON, of Strongsville, Ohio.

ASA D. SMITH,
MARK HOPKINS,
THEODORE FRELINGHUYSEN.

May, 1857.

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THE ERROR AND THE DUTY

IN

REGARD TO SLAVERY.

BY

REV. R. B. THURSTON.

(vii)

THE ERROR AND THE DUTY

IN REGARD TO SLAVERY.

THE great and agitating question of our country is that concerning slavery. Beneath the whole subject there lies of course some simple truth, for all fundamental truth is simple, which will be readily accepted by patriotic and Christian minds, when it is clearly perceived and discreetly applied. It is the design of these pages to exhibit this truth, and to show that it is a foundation for a union of sentiment and action on the part of good men, by which, under the divine blessing, our threatening controversies, North and South, may be happily terminated.

To avoid misapprehension, let it be noticed that we shall examine the central claim of slavery, first, as a legal institution; afterwards, the



fruit of a tree yielding seed." This, then, is the original and permanent ground of man's title to property; and the important fact to be observed is the *specific divine grant*. The right of all men equally to own property is the positive institution of the Creator. We all alike hold our possessions by his authentic warrant, his deed of conveyance.

Let us be understood here. We are not educating from the Bible a doctrine which would level society, by giving to all men equal shares of property; but a doctrine which extends equal divine protection over the right of every man to hold that amount of property which he earns by his own faculties, in consistency with all divine statutes.

This right is indeed argued from nature; and justly; for God's revelations in nature and in his word coincide. It is, however, a right of so much consequence to the world, that, where nature leaves it, he incorporates it, and gives it the force of a law; so that in the sequel we can with propriety speak of it as a law, as well as an institution. To the believer in the Bible, this law is the end of argument.

It will have weight with some minds to state that this position is supported by the highest legal authority. In his Commentaries on the

Laws of England, Blackstone quotes the primeval grant of God, and then remarks, "This is the only true and solid foundation of man's dominion over external things, whatever airy metaphysical notions may have been started by fanciful writers upon this subject. The earth, therefore, and all things therein, are the general property of all mankind, exclusive of other beings, from the immediate gift of the Creator." *

It will enhance the force of this argument to remember that this universal right of property is one of what may be called a sacred trinity of paradisaical institutions. These institutions are the Sabbath, appointed in regard for our relations to God as moral beings; marriage, ordained for our welfare as members of a successive race; and the right of property, conferred to meet our necessities as dwellers on this material globe. These three are the world's inheritance from lost Eden. They were received by the first father in behalf of all his posterity. They were designed for all men as men. It is demonstrable that they are indispensable, that the world may become Paradise Regained. "Property, marriage, and religion have been called the pillars of soci-

* An extended passage containing the extract may be found conveniently in Chambers' Cyclopædia of English Literature, vol. 2, p. 246.

ety;" and the first is of equal importance with the other two; for all progress in domestic felicity and in religious culture depends on property, and also on the equitable distribution or possession of property, as one of its essential conditions. Property lies in the foundation of every happy home, however humble; and property gilds the pinnacle of every consecrated temple. The wise and impartial Disposer, therefore, makes the endowments of his creatures equal with their responsibilities: to all those on whom he lays the obligations of religion and of the family state, he gives the right of holding the property on which the dwelling and the sanctuary must be founded. It is a sacred right, a divine investiture, bearing the date of the creation and the seal of the Creator.

The blessing of this institution, like that of the Sabbath and of the family, has indeed been shattered by the fall of man; but when God said to Noah and his sons, concerning the inferior creatures, "Into your hand are they delivered; even as the green herb have I given you all things," it was reëstablished and consecrated anew. The Psalmist repeated the assurance to the world when he wrote, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hand; thou hast put all things under his feet."

We now advance to the second part of our proposition. Men have no such right to hold property in men. Since the right is from God, it follows immediately that they can hold in ownership, by a divine title, only what he has given. But he has not given to men, as men, a right of ownership in men. No one will contend for a moment that the universal grant above considered confers upon them mutual dominion, or rightful property in their species. The idea is not in the terms; it is nowhere in the Bible; it is not in nature; it is repugnant to common sense; it would resolve the race into the absurd and terrific relation of antagonists, struggling, each one for the mastery of his own estate in another,—I, for the possession of my right in you; and you, for yours in me. Nay, the very act of entitling all men to hold property proves the exemption of all, by the divine will, from the condition of property. The idea that a man can be an article of property and an owner of property by the same supreme warrant is contradictory and absurd.

We now have sure ground for objecting to the system of American slavery, as such. It is directly opposed to the original, authoritative institution of Jehovah. He gives men the right to hold property. Slavery strips them of the divine

investiture. He gives men dominion over inferior creatures. Slavery makes them share the subjection of the brute. That slavery does this, the laws of the States in which it exists abundantly declare. Slaves are "chattels," "estate personal." Slave-holders assembled in convention solemnly affirm in view of northern agitation of the subject, that "masters have the same right to their slaves which they have to any other property."

This asserted and exercised right is the vital principle and substance of the institution. It is the central delusion and transgression; and the evils of the system to white and black are its legitimate consequences. The legal and the leading idea concerning slaves is that they are property: of course, the idea that they are men, invested with the rights of men, practically sinks; and, from the premise that they are property, the conclusion is logical that they may be treated as property. Why should *property*, contrary to the interests of the proprietor, be exempt from sale, receive instruction, give testimony in court, hold estate, preserve family ties, be loved as the owner loves himself, in fine, enjoy all or any of the "inalienable rights" of *man*? It is because they are held as property, that slaves are sold; because they are property, families are torn

asunder; because they are property, instruction, is denied them; because they are property, the law, and the public sentiment that makes the law, crush them as men.

We do not here call in question the mitigations with which Christian masters temper into mildness the hard working of an evil system. Those mitigations do not, however, logically or morally defend slavery. Nay, they condemn it; for they are practical tributes to the fact that the laws of humanity, not of property, are binding in respect to the slaves. Hence they really show the inherent inconsistency of the idea, and the unrighteousness of the system which regards men as property.

Notwithstanding those mitigations, the system itself, like every wrong system, produces characteristic evils, which can be prevented only by removing their cause, the false doctrine that men can be rightfully held in ownership. Fallen as man is, no prophet was needed to foretell at the first the dreadful facts that have been recorded in the bitter history of man's claim of property in man. Such a history must always be a scroll written within and without with lamentations and mourning and woe. Man is not a safe depository of such power. A human institution which subverts a divine institution, and which

carries with it the assumption of a divine prerogative in constituting a new species of property, naturally saps the foundations of every other divine institution and law which stands in its way. Hence, for example, the fall of the domestic institution before that of slavery.

The inherent wrongfulness of American slavery as a legal and social institution is therefore clearly demonstrated. It formally abolishes by law and usage a divine institution. Hence, in its practical operation, it sets aside other divine institutions and laws. Consequently it stands in the same relations to the divine government with the abolition of the Sabbath by infidel France, and with the perversion of the family institution by the Mormon territory of Utah.

Here the fundamental argument from the Bible rests. But slavery justifies itself by the Bible. It becomes essential, therefore, to examine the validness of this justification.

There are but two possible ways of avoiding the conclusion that has been reached. To vindicate slavery it must be proved, first, that God has abolished the original institution, conferring on men universally the right to hold property; or, secondly, it must be proved, that, while he has by special enactments taken away from a portion of mankind the right to hold property, he has

given to other men the right to hold the former as property. Further, to justify American slavery, it must be shown that these special enactments include the African race and the American States.

In regard to the first point we simply remark, it is morally impossible that God should permanently and generally abolish the original institution concerning property; because, as in the case of its coevals, the Sabbath and marriage, the reason for it is permanent and unchangeable, and "*lex stat dum ratio manet*," the law stands while the reason remains. Moreover, there is not a word of such repeal in the Bible. That institution, therefore, is still a charter of rights for the children of men. Till it is assailed, more need not be said.

As to the second point, we believe that careful investigation will prove conclusively, that no special enactments are now in force which arrest or modify the institutions of Eden, in regard to any state or any persons. It will, then, remain demonstrated, that the legal system of slavery exists utterly without warrant of the Holy Scriptures, and in defiance of the authority of the Creator. The word of God is throughout consistent.

It is here freely admitted, that God can arrest the operation of general laws by special statutes.

He can take away from men the right to hold property which he has given, and, if he please, constitute them the property of other men. It is, in this respect, as it is with life. God can take what he gives. If, then, he has given authority to individuals or to nations to hold others as property, they may do so. Nay, more; if their commission is imperative, they must do so. But such an act of God creates an *exception* to his own fundamental law, and, like all exceptions, conveys its own restrictions, and *proves the rule*. It imposes no yoke, save upon those appointed to subjugation. It confers no authority, save upon those specifically invested with it. They are bound to keep absolutely within the prescribed terms, and no others can innocently seize their delegated dominion. Outside of the excepted parties the universal law has sway unimpaired. It is in this instance as it is in regard to marriage. God permitted the patriarchs to multiply their wives; but monogamy is now a sacred institution for the world. So the supreme Disposer can make a slave, or a nation of slaves; and the world shall be even the more solemnly bound by the original institutes concerning property. It follows, without a chasm in the argument, or a doubtful step, that, when persons or States reduce men to the condition of chat-

tels, *without divine authorization*, they are guilty of subverting a divine institution; and, since it is the prerogative of God to determine what shall be property, they are chargeable with a presumptuous usurpation of divine prerogative, in making property, so far as human force and law can do it, of those whom Jehovah has created in his own image, and invested with all the original rights of men.

The soundness of the principle contained in these remarks, both in law and in biblical interpretation, will not be questioned. In the light of it, let us examine briefly the justifications of slavery as derived from the Bible. Happily the principle itself saves the labor of minute and protracted criticism.

We first consider the curse pronounced upon Canaan by Noah. Admitting all that is necessary to the support of slavery, namely, that that curse constituted the descendants of *Canaan* the property of some other tribe or people, upon whom it conferred the right of holding them as property, yet even so this passage does not justify but condemns American slavery; for that curse does not touch the African race: *they are not descendants of Canaan*;* and it

* Genesis, 10th Chapter. Vide, Kitto's Cyclopædia, for views in this connection.

gives no rights to American States. In later times the Canaanites were devoted to destruction for their sins. The Hebrews were the agents appointed by Jehovah to this work of retribution. It was not, however, accomplished in their entire extermination. In the case of the Gibeonites it was formally commuted to servitude, and other nations occupying the promised land were made tributary. Thus the curse upon Canaan was fulfilled by *authorized executioners* of divine justice.

What light does the whole history now throw upon slavery? It is plain the curse was a judicial act of God concerning Canaan. It follows that conquest with extermination or servitude was a judgment of God, which he appointed his chosen people to execute. It follows further, that those, who, without his commission, reduce to bondage men who are not descendants of Canaan, do inflict a curse on those whom he has not cursed; and thus virtually assume his most awful prerogative as the Judge of guilty nations.

We then inquire whether the States of the South have received warrant for enslaving any portion of mankind. Has God *given* them the African race as property? Where is the commission? The argument fails to justify modern slavery for the same reason identically that it fails to justify offensive war and conquest. God

has not given the right — has neither proclaimed the curse, nor commissioned the agent of the curse. Christian States in America seize it, and lay it upon those whom he has not cursed. The passage of his word which has been considered affords them no sanction.

We proceed to another passage. It is supposed by many to be an incontrovertible defence of modern slavery, that the Hebrews were authorized to buy bondmen and bondmaids of the heathen round about them. Let us candidly examine this defence.

Why were the Hebrews authorized by God in express terms to buy servants, and possess them as their "money?" Evidently *because they did not otherwise have this authority*. Human beings, as we have seen, were not "given" in the grant of property. They do not, therefore, fall within the scope of the general laws of property. If they had so fallen, the special statutes, by which the Hebrews purchased them, would have been as gratuitous as special enactments for buying animals, trees, and minerals. *Of all nations they only have possessed this right; for they only received it by special bestowment*. The rest of mankind have ever been prohibited from assuming it by fundamental laws. If ever there was a case in which the exception proves the rule, that case

is before us; and therefore a chasm yawns between the premise and the conclusion defensive of slavery, which no exegesis and no logic can bridge over.

To illustrate the strength of this argument, let the fact be observed, that, if it could be set aside, it would follow, by parity of reasoning, that the clergy of our country, regardless of fundamental laws, have right to take possession of a tenth part of the estates and incomes of their fellow-citizens, because the Levites in this manner received their inheritance among their brethren. It is plain, however, that, as in regard to other interests no less important than liberty or slavery, so also in regard to slavery itself, the special laws of the Old Testament are no longer in force; whence it follows that the vital doctrine of the system, "masters have the same right to their slaves which they have to any other property," is totally erroneous. The institution which claims solid foundation here is built on nothing.

We cannot forbear to adduce an instance of unexceptionable testimony to the validity of this reasoning. In one or two famous articles on slavery and abolitionism, the Princeton Repository adopts it, with another application, and says, "So far as polygamy and divorce were permitted under the old dispensation they were lawful, and

became so by that permission; and they ceased to be lawful when that permission was withdrawn, and a new law given. That Christ did give a new law is abundantly evident." In the same manner, 'so far as' slavery 'was permitted under the old dispensation it was lawful, and became so by that permission; and it ceased to be lawful when that permission was withdrawn, and a new law given.' It is true, however, only in a qualified sense, that Christ gave "a new law" concerning polygamy and divorce. His law restored the original institution of marriage, as in Eden; and this was "new" to the Jews, because there had been departure from it. In like manner the New Testament, if not the very words of Christ, now gives a new law concerning slavery in the same sense; that is, as will appear, in the sequel, the Christian precepts restore the original institution concerning property as well as concerning marriage. The laws which allowed polygamy and slavery, and therefore the right, passed away together.

Here we leave the Old Testament. No other passages need examination; for all consist with these positions. So far as that sacred volume gives light, the world are bound by the laws and have equal right to the full blessings of three divine institutions, whose foundations were laid in

Paradise, and whose complete and glorious proportions will encompass the universal, millennial felicity.

The defence of slavery from the New Testament now demands brief notice. We desire to allow it full force, while we ask the reader's candid judgment of the conclusion.

Of course, the New Testament sanctions now what it sanctioned in the days of its authors. That must have been *Roman, not Hebrew*, slavery; for they lived and wrote to men under Roman law. Besides, there is reason to believe, as Kitto states, that the Jews at that time held no slaves. In point of historic truth, it appears that the Mosaic law, finding slavery in existence, practically operated as a system of gradual emancipation for its extinction. "There is no evidence that Christ ever came in contact with slavery." This sufficiently explains why he did not give a "new law" concerning it in specific terms. The occasion did not arise, as it did arise in regard to polygamy and divorce, with which he did come in contact. Furthermore, there was no need of new law, other than was actually given.

The argument from the New Testament for the rightfulness of slavery is twofold, being built on the instructions given to masters and servants. It fails on both sides.

For, first, the precepts addressed to servants convey no authority to national rulers or to private individuals to set aside the institution of Jehovah by reducing men to the condition of slaves. These precepts simply enjoin the conduct which Christianity required in their actual situation. They do not vindicate the law and usage by which they were held as property. This is abundantly evident in the texts themselves, and more emphatically, when they are compared with the parallel cases.

Christ promulgated these rules. "I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Does this empower States to legalize fraud and violence? Does it transmute all the *evil* which Jesus' disciples have endured into *righteousness* of those who have inflicted the evil? Does it wash the crimsoned hands of persecutors in innocency? Does it justify the wilful smiter? All men know better. No one contends for such exposition. Yet it is indispensable to the interpretation which finds a justification of slavery in precepts which enjoin obedience on slaves. That obedience is required on other grounds.

Another example. The New Testament explicitly commands citizens to submit to the civil power. Does this sanctify the tyranny of a Nero or a Nicholas? In the enjoined submission of subjects, has the despot, or the state, full license for edicts and acts of oppression and iniquity? Yet they are logically compelled to admit this, and thus, in theory at least, banish freedom from the whole earth, who find in commands addressed to servants power conferred on legislators and masters to make them slaves, that is, to hold them as property. Instead of this, the rights and obligations of rulers, and of those who claim to be owners of their fellow men, are defined in a very different class of instructions.

Secondly, the instructions addressed to masters forbid the exercise of the right which is assumed in slavery. To make this clear, we observe, primarily, there is no passage in the New Testament which *institutes* the relation of men held in ownership by men. There is no direct reference to the civil laws which constituted this relation. They are passed by silently, as are the laws that established idolatry, and kindled the fires of persecution. Their existence is tacitly acknowledged in the use of the terms which designate masters and servants; and that is all.

Hence those who find here an apology for slavery are obliged to refer to secular history for the facts and definitions on which their argument rests. Accordingly, no passage in the New Testament would be void of meaning, though slavery should cease. In this respect the Constitution of the United States resembles the sacred books; for not one word of that instrument, interpreted on just principles as the palladium of liberty, needs to be obliterated in the abolition of slavery. Furthermore, and this covers our position, the New Testament, disregarding the Roman law, refers masters exclusively to the law of God as their rule for the treatment of servants. A single citation, with which all passages agree, is sufficient to show this. "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." Now, as none can find in such precepts a right to destroy God's primary institution concerning the family, no more can they find in them a right to destroy his primary and universal institution concerning property. Stronger than this, the conclusion is inevitable, that the very precepts which are relied upon to support American slavery do condemn and destroy it; for the law of God, by which they bind masters, ordaining from Eden what is just and equal

between men, abolishes the fundamental and central law of the system.*

* Col. 4: 1; "Ye masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal." That is, act towards them on the principles of justice and equity. Justice requires that all their rights, as men, as husbands, and as parents, should be regarded. And these rights are not to be determined by the civil law, but by the law of God. . . . But God concedes nothing to the master beyond what the law of love allows. Paul requires for servants not only what is strictly just, but *τὴν ἰσότητα*. What is that? Literally, it is *equality*. This is not only its signification, but its meaning. Servants are to be treated by their masters on the principles of equality. Not that they are to be equal with their masters in authority or station or circumstances; but that they are to be treated as having, as men, as husbands, and as parents, equal rights with their masters. It is just as great a sin to deprive a servant of the just recompense for his labor, or to keep him in ignorance, or to take from him his wife or child, as it is to act thus towards a free man. This is the equality which the law of God demands, and on this principle the final judgment is to be administered. Christ will punish the master for defrauding the servant as severely as he will punish the servant for robbing his master. The same penalty will be inflicted for the violation of the conjugal or parental rights of the one as of the other. For, as the apostle adds, there is no respect of persons with him. At his bar the question will be, "What was done?" not "Who did it?" Paul carries this so far as to apply the principle not only to the acts, but to the temper of masters. They are not only to act towards their servants on the principles of justice and equity, but are to *avoid threatening*. This includes all mani-

It is argued, indeed, that slavery is right, because masters, as well as fathers and rulers, may require obedience. The argument fails utterly; for there is at the foundation no analogy in the cases. The family and the State are divine institutions, having sanction in the Bible; but slavery subverts a divine institution. Fathers and rulers, *as such*, have duties and rights suitable to the relations they sustain by the will of God. Masters, *as such*, have no *rights*; for their relation, as holding property in men, is contrary to his will. Their duty, to which they are bound by the solemn consideration that he is their Master, is practically to restore to their servants the rights which he confers upon all; for nothing less than this can be just and equal in his sight.

This view discloses the harmony of the whole Bible concerning slavery; and, in the light of the two Testaments, the institution stands as a legalized violation of the positive will of Jehovah.

festation of contempt and ill temper, or undue severity. All this is enforced by the consideration that masters have a Master in heaven, to whom they are responsible for their treatment of their servants. . . . Believers will act in conformity with the Gospel in this. And the result of such obedience, if it could become general, would be, that first the evils of slavery, and then slavery itself, would pass away naturally, and as healthfully as children cease to be minors.

Prof. Hodge's Commentary.

We now condense the whole argument into its briefest form, in the following syllogisms.

The entire right of men to hold property is given by the Creator. He gives to American States and citizens no right to hold property in men. Therefore they have no such right.

Again. An institution is sinful, which, without divine warrant, holds property in men, thus assuming a divine prerogative, and subverting a divine institution. American slavery does this. Therefore it is a sinful institution.

The purpose of this tract now introduces a new series of topics. The argument demands its application; and the exigencies of the times present momentous questions, which it must answer.

Hitherto we have spoken of the system of slavery. We come now to persons connected with it. Because the system is sinful, the question immediately occurs, who are chargeable with the sin; for there is no sin without sinners. The answer is obvious. They are chargeable who founded it, and all who wilfully implicate themselves with it. Practically, they are always chargeable who adopt it as their own in theory and practice, who support it in the State, consecrate it in the Church, and labor for its extension. They are chargeable, for they bring heresy

into creeds, unrighteousness into legislation, and crime into popular usage. If they are masters, they stand in the same moral relations with persecutors and tyrannical rulers, guilty for all personal injuries they inflict under color of unjust laws; and, whether masters or not, they are guilty for exerting their influence to sustain laws which set aside the authority of God, and withhold the rights he has given. Such men are accountable to God and to society for deliberate, organized, aggressive iniquity. The "organic sin" of the State is their sin, the sin of each in his own measure; for they are the individuals who determine the acts and the character of the slave-holding State as such.

But are there no exceptions among slaveholders? We trust there are many. There is a plain distinction between wicked laws and the personal acts of men who live under those laws. Some may approve them, and use or abuse them to the injury of their fellow men. Others may disapprove them, and refuse, by means of them, to do or justify a wrong. Christians may become in a legal sense owners of slaves, while they heartily deprecate the system of oppression, while they are ready to unite with good men in feasible and wise measures for its removal, and while they obey the Christian precepts towards

their servants, rendering unto them what is just and equal to men and brethren in Christ. Such Christians and such men do not hold slaves in the sense which God forbids; and they cannot be charged with the wickedness of laws by which they, as well as the slaves, are oppressed. On their estates a higher law than that of slavery has sway. To them their slaves, though legally property, are morally and actually men. The Bible sustains their position. They are the Philomons to whom Paul gives fellowship, and Onesimus returns, not as a slave, but a brother beloved. In the trials of their situation they should receive the cordial sympathy of Christians everywhere. It is, indeed, to their sound convictions and their political influence the world must look, in part at least, for the ultimate, peaceful extinction of American slavery. Without them, what would the South become? With the Scriptures in our hand we earnestly say to them, "Throw the weight of your influence against unrighteous laws, fulfil to servants the law of God, and you shall have the sympathy and confidence of good men everywhere. Nay, more; you, with their help, and they with your help, will confine the spreading curse, till, with God's blessing, it shall cease; and Christian and civilized man shall have no more communion with it."

These discriminations answer certain ecclesiastical questions, which have occasioned much perplexity and discord. When properly applied, they take away whatever support a wicked institution has found by leaning upon the Church; at the same time they award to consistent Christians what is due to them by the religion of Jesus. If it shall be said, there will be practical difficulty in applying these discriminations, it is sufficient to answer, it will be less than the difficulty of disregarding them.

The question now arises, what can be done for the restriction and ultimate extinction of slavery as it is; for, since it is sinful, Christianity and patriotism declare it should be restrained and abolished.

First. The extension of slavery can and should be prevented by the Federal Government. The Scriptures have shown us, that the people in their sovereignty have not the right to create a slave State or a slave. Of course, the legislators and presidents, who receive in trust the power which emanates from the people, have no such right. If the Constitution assumed to confer this power, it would be the first national duty to amend that instrument in this particular. There is no power on earth competent to set aside either of the Creator's original institutions for man. But, ac-

cording to the sound and established principle of strict construction, the Constitution as it is does not create slavery, or even acknowledge its existence, except by inference. Hence there is no legal objection to the measure which religion herself ordains. The religious and the political obligations of all citizens and all legislators coincide to protect, under the jurisdiction of Congress, the right of every man to be exempt from the condition of property, and to enjoy the property which he honestly earns. Thus the question concerning slavery and the territories is morally settled by divine authority; and to this no real objection can be made, except by that great interest, whose existence is inherently unrighteous and irreligious.

Secondly. In the slave States, legislation should restore to the enslaved population the primitive rights which God has given to all men, establishing for them, on humane and Christian principles, such relations as are suitable to their condition of poverty, ignorance, and dependence, and are adapted to secure at once their improvement and the general welfare.

This is the logical conclusion to be derived from the premises. As the central wrong of slavery consists in making men articles of property by law, the rectification is to lift from them by law the curse of the false and irreligious doctrine,

that they can be rightfully held as property. Thus the axe is laid to the root of the tree.

This is also the conclusion to which we are forced by other moral principles bearing on the case. For men to receive services of men is right. Accordingly, the New Testament allows masters to receive services of those who are slaves in the sense of human law; but at the same time the sacred book requires masters, with all who employ labor, to make the recompenses which are just and equal towards men; for slavery is not right; and legislators, on their responsibility to the Ruler of nations, are bound to adjust the laws in harmony with the first principles of individual and moral obligation.

Furthermore, this is the only practical conclusion. By inevitable necessity, the slaves, as a body, must remain on the soil of their bondage. Only exceptional cases of removal can occur. They are the laborers of the South; and no State will, or can, or is bound, to remove its laborers. It is simply bound to protect and treat them with Christian equity and kindness. Banishment of them would be injustice and cruelty, violating perhaps no less than restoring divine rights. Moreover, no practicable means of removing them have ever been seriously proposed; and, till they shall be, the point needs no discussion.

But the question may be raised, "Are the slaves to endure their present wrongs until the laws shall be thus renewed, or perhaps forever?" We reply, in showing how slave-holders can cease from guilty connection with slavery; we have also shown how the situation of the slaves becomes one of practical righteousness, before the laws can be readjusted; and for this great obligation of the body politic, sufficient time must be allowed. Moral principles do not exact natural impossibilities. The elevation of oppressed millions can be accomplished only in harmony with great natural and social, as well as ethical laws, which the wisdom of God has ordained.

It remains therefore, that, for a period of which no man can see the end, the slaves must, in most cases, dwell within the present boundaries; but it is incumbent on the citizens and legislators of the South to institute *immediate* measures for restoring to them the inviolable rights of men. So long as they continue, by the *necessities* of the case, in the relation of servants and laborers, masters should deal with them according to the rules of humane and Christian equity, paying to them in suitable ways their just earnings, holding sacred their family ties, and securing to them the privileges of education and religion. Meanwhile,

the legislatures of the several States, by wise enactments, should coöperate with masters in training their servile population for the position which the Creator designed for men.

When these things shall come to pass, a consideration, in which many good men have sought relief in regard to slavery, will have multiplied force. The providential wisdom of God, in bringing millions of the children of Africa from a land of pagan darkness and violence to a land of freedom and Christianity, will shine with new lustre, when they shall receive from American hands, together with true religion, every divine right, and shall thus be qualified and enabled to convey to the dark habitations of their fathers the infinite blessings of enlightened liberty and of the gospel of eternal salvation.

These things are practicable. So long as "righteousness exalteth a nation," a great, free, and Christian people can do what they should do; and thus only can they secure, under the divine blessing, their own highest prosperity and glory. To prove this would be simply to repeat the familiar facts which exhibit the legitimate effects of slavery on general intelligence, enterprise, and virtue.

But what shall produce the true and wide spread public sentiment, which is indispensable to usher in so radical a change in the laws and

institutions of proud and powerful States? Truth must accomplish this great work—THE TRUTH that our Creator does not place those who bear his image in bondage to their fellow men as property, but invests them with a common and inviolable right of dominion over inferior things. The vivid light which this truth sheds on the social relations of men has been extinguished at the South; and it has been dimmed at the North. In every right way and in every place, therefore, it should be made to shine again unobscured. Expounders should bring it forth from the Holy Oracles; for Jehovah has hallowed it there, and made it equal in authority with the Sabbath. The press should publish it; for it is the function of the press to convey unceasingly to the public mind whatever will establish and crown the public integrity and welfare. All men should seal it in their hearts; for it is the divine rule and bond of brotherhood in the universal dominion. It surrounds them with protected families, and builds their safe firesides and their altars of worship.

The question arises here, can general agreement be expected in regard to this primary truth, and measures which legitimately proceed from it. It is to be supposed there are men in whose hearts there is no fear of God or love of their fellow beings. With such men these views

may be powerless; but for men of Christian principle, we are confident they show a common foundation for united sentiments and efforts.

There is now a general, practical, vital consent that government and society should respect the divine institutions of the family and the Sabbath. Beneath all superficial strifes and irrelevant issues, there is the same sure ground for a living and earnest agreement, that government and society should respect the equal and coeval institution of the right of property.

Christian and conservative men can unite in the proposed measures and the truth which appoints them; for they desire to preserve only what is right. Christian and progressive men can unite in them; for they desire to abolish only what is wrong. Politics can approve them; for they are constitutional and patriotic. Philanthropy can be satisfied with them; for they promise all that in the nature of the case can be promised for the early relief of the slaves. Religion sanctions them; for they restore her own institutions. Good men of the South can unite in them with those of the North; for they have equal authority North and South. They proffer only that moral aid which great communities, sharing common interests and responsibilities, should render and receive with intimate and

cordial confidence. They honor the sovereignty of proud and jealous States; for each of them, exercising the power which springs from its own people in its own way, will discharge its political obligations to all within its boundaries.

A few years or even months of combined efforts will suffice to convey this truth with vital energy to millions of minds and hearts. In due time it will manifest its efficacy in the public sentiment and public policy. We trust in its power. It is invincible; it will be victorious; for it is from God. Its absence from the popular and legislative mind well explains many of the evils that have been precipitated upon the nation. Its future prevalence, under divine mercy, will arrest the progress of events which would be, as we judge, not remedy, but retributive destruction, on account of slavery.

This leads us to the final question. Are the principles and measures advocated in this tract or their equivalents, with the contemplated result, essential to the welfare of our country? We are compelled to believe so.

We present, for the consideration of citizens and statesmen, this fact. In harmony with that law of fitness which pervades the Creator's works, all men are constituted with a nature corresponding with the dominion they have received. They

feel that they have a right to hold property, and should not be held as property. Slaves feel this. Masters often show that they feel it. They who make laws for slavery, North and South, show that they feel it. The little property which slaves are often allowed to possess, so far from furnishing apology for slavery, is an unwitting tribute to the living principle that destroys the system. Here is a philosophical demonstration that slavery cannot stand in perpetuity. This vital element in human nature, to which a divine institution itself is but an index, is subterranean fire beneath the pyramid of oppression. Though long crushed and silent, it will not always sleep. Do men expect to control forever, by law and force, that sense of rights which burns inextinguishable in every human breast, which God himself kindled in Eden? As well pile rocks on volcanoes to suppress earthquakes.

"Vital in every part,
It can but by annihilating die."

In this light, it is no prediction to say, if slavery survives to consummate its own results it will destroy our country.

The great political and religious problem of the slave-holding States, on which their welfare really depends, is not, how shall we extend sla-

very? but, how shall we lay legal foundation for the rights of our servile population as men? Unless it shall be anticipated and prevented, by restoring to them the dominion which the Creator bestowed, a day is as sure to come on natural principles as the sun to rise, when the masses of human property will assert for themselves the indestructible rights of their being. Generations may not see it; but woe betides the States implicated in this oppression, when that day shall dawn; and the longer it tarries the greater the woe.

To our mind, the statesmen are infatuated who do not in their policy regard this universal sense of rights. It is this which is now making so bitter conflict on the prairies of Kansas. It will always make conflict, till slavery expires.

In connection with the general welfare, there is another consideration, which we solemnly urge upon every man who respects the Bible. It is the displeasure of God for slavery. He gave the rights which it denies; and he will assuredly vindicate his own institutions. It would contradict his word and history, which is but the story of his providence, to suppose that he will perpetually allow myriads of men, in this land of light, to hold as property other myriads and even millions of their fellow men and fellow Christians,

whom he has endowed, as bearing his own image, with equal rights. With Jefferson we have reason to tremble for our country, when we behold her support of slavery and remember that God is just. France abolished the Sabbath; and thrones have gone down in blood. America may abolish another divine institution; and for this her proud States may be convulsed. The previous topic shows, indeed, that God has so constituted the social elements of this world, that a great wrong, like slavery, ultimately provides for its own retribution. The oppressor himself treasures up the vials of wrath for Him who taketh vengeance.

In view of all the considerations which have now passed before our minds, is it too much to believe, that the diffusion of kindly and scriptural sentiments, with the blessing of heaven producing general agreement in principles and measures, must be the means of our country's salvation from the guilt and perils of slavery? If it is not extended, misguided, infatuated men may, indeed, threaten to dissolve the Union. Still we fear that extension most; for religion teaches us to fear God more than man. It allows us but this alternative, to keep his commandments, and trust that he will make the wrath of man to praise him. We hold that national righteous-

ness in his sight, "first pure, then peaceable," is better and safer than union and slavery with his frown. Let justice be done, and the heavens will not fall.

Whatever purposes God may conceal in the cloudy future, present duties are ours. He seals them in his word. Notwithstanding all the heats and perversions of parties and interests, we trust there will yet be a single voice of our nation's good men. Citizens will speak the truth, legislators will enact the truth, churches will hallow the truth, vital to civilization and Christianity, that, by Jehovah's will, man is not the property of man. Then, under the benediction of our Father in heaven, all his children in mutual protection and benevolence will enjoy their property, their homes, and their Sabbath; and he will more richly bless the land of the free and the just.

FRIENDLY LETTERS
TO
A CHRISTIAN SLAVEHOLDER.

BY
REV. A. C. BALDWIN.

(39)

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION. — SOUTHERN COURTESY AND HOSPITALITY. — CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOUTH AND NORTH. — NO ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE AT HEART. — THEY SHOULD UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER. — A FREE INTERCHANGE OF SENTIMENT DESIRABLE. — SINCERE PATRIOTISM AND PIETY COMMON TO BOTH. — THESE AN EFFECTUAL SAFEGUARD TO OUR UNION AND GOOD-FELLOWSHIP.

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN BROTHER, — I embrace the first moment at my command since leaving your pleasant home, to express the gratification afforded me by my recent visit to the "Sunny South." The kind hospitality and polite attentions shown me by yourself and other Christian friends, during my recent interesting sojourn with you, will ever be gratefully remembered. I had previously heard "by the hearing of the ear" of the open, frank warm-heartedness and generous impulses of southern people, but now I can fully appreciate them. The lessons taught us by experience, whether they be pleasant or painful, are the most profitable, and are most

deeply engraven upon the memory. If there are any persons who think or speak lightly of the reputed complaisance and Christian courtesy of those who live south of "Mason and Dixon's line," I have only to say to them, — go and make the acquaintance of those families which give the tone and character to society there, and enjoy the hospitalities which they almost force upon you with so much politeness and delicacy as to make you feel that by sharing them you are conferring rather than receiving a favor, and your skepticism on this point will be happily and effectually removed.

You will not understand me, my dear sir, as implying that our southern brethren have really more heart than we at the North, although there seems to be "*primâ facie*" evidence in your favor; at least, so far as polite and generous attention to strangers is concerned. In this last particular, you are constantly teaching us important lessons. Still, I contend that the Northerner has as large and generous a soul, when you get at it, as anybody. We have hearts which beat warm and true, but our cautious habits and constitutional temperament (phlegmatic sometimes) conceal them from view; whereas you carry yours throbbing with generous emotions in your hands, exposed to the

gaze of everybody. The Southron is artless and impulsive, as well as noble; the Northerner is no less noble, but having been taught more frequently the doctrine of "expediency" than his southern brother, he stops and "calculates" when, and in what circumstances, it is best to exhibit his whole character. In both cases, the pure gold is there; but in the former it lies upon the surface or in the alluvial, while in the latter it is often imbedded deep in the quartz-rock;—it requires some labor to get it out, but the ultimate yield is most rich and abundant.

It is very desirable that a greater degree of social intercourse be kept up between the North and South. We are brethren of one great family, and there is no good reason why this family should not be a united and happy one. To a considerable extent it is so. It is true we do not all think alike on every subject, and some of these subjects are of vast importance, and intimately connected with our prosperity and happiness. We need to understand each other better, and to this end there should be more intimacy, and a frequent and free interchange of views;—not for strife and debate, but for mutual edification and enlightenment. There was probably never a family of brothers, however strong their love for each other, whose views

of domestic policy were exactly alike; but there need be no lack of fraternal confidence and harmony for all that. There are certain great fundamental principles which underlie every thing else, and form the basis of the family compact. These principles are filial reverence, fraternal affection, love for home, and a watchful jealousy of aught that can in the least interfere with the happiness or reputation of their beloved family circle. Falling back upon these principles to preserve good-will and harmony, they are not in the least afraid to discuss those topics on which there is an honest difference of opinion; on the contrary, they take pleasure in doing so, for the result is a strengthening of the ties which bind them to each other, and a modification and partial blending of opinions that seemed antagonistic.

Thus it should be in our great political and religious brotherhood. The North and South have each their peculiar views of what pertains to their own interests, and the interests of the great family of the Republic. But do not let us stand at a distance and look at each other with an eye of jealousy because of these differences. Surely we can meet as fellow-citizens, and discuss matters of common interest, and the

interests of common humanity, without losing our temper or engendering any ill feeling or family discord.

It is affirmed by some, that there are certain subjects, at least one, of so peculiar and delicate a nature as to forbid discussion, lest the result should be heart-burnings, alienation, and perhaps disunion in our happy fraternity. I cannot for a moment admit the sentiment. It is an ungenerous reflection upon the courtesy, Christian candor, piety, and good-sense, both of the North and South. I hold that good citizens and good Christians can, if they will, discuss any subject without giving the least occasion for offence, or endangering that compact which so happily binds us together. As it is in the family circle, there are certain great principles most dear to us all, on which we can fall back, and which, if we are true to ourselves and to them, will prove efficient safeguards to our temper and good-fellowship. The first of these is Patriotism. We have a common country, and we love it, and we love each other for our country's sake. We are children of a common mother, whose kind arms have encircled us, and whose bosom has nourished us bounteously and with impartiality, and God forbid, that, as wayward, ungrateful children,

we should wring her maternal heart with anguish by our unfraternal conduct toward each other. We shall not do it, — either at the North or at the South. We are true patriots, and in our very differences, love of country come in as an important element to shape and modify our opinions; and while we may be adopting different theories, we are conscientiously seeking the same end, namely, the greatest good of our beloved country.

The second is piety. We love our country well, but we love our Saviour more, and for his sake we will love and treat each other as brethren, and not fall out by the way because we may not see through the same optic-glasses. We will cheerfully hear what each has to say on whatever pertains to Christian morals and practice. There are thousands of sincere, warm-hearted Christians, whose love to Christ raises them immeasurably above sectionalism and prejudice, and who daily inquire, "what is truth?" and "what is duty?" and they entertain that "charity" which "suffereth long and is kind; is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" and "never faileth." When this love is in exercise, Christian brethren may

open their hearts freely to each other on any subject, whether it be "for doctrine, or reproof, or for instruction in righteousness."

Whatever may be true of others, I hope that you and I will be able to demonstrate to the world, that, although one of us lives at the North and the other at the South, yet we can communicate with each other unreservedly on an almost interdicted topic, with mutual kind feelings, if not to edification.

Respectfully and fraternally,
Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

A DIFFICULT AND DELICATE SUBJECT PROPOSED. — AGITATION OF IT UNAVOIDABLE. — CHRISTIANS NORTH AND SOUTH SHOULD GIVE THE DISCUSSION OF IT A RIGHT DIRECTION. — WE ARE ALL INTERESTED IN THE ISSUE. — NORTHERN DISCLAIMERS.

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN BROTHER, — In my last I intimated that I hoped you and I, by our correspondence, would be able to furnish the world a practical illustration of good-nature and kind feeling in the discussion of a subject that has been a fruitful source of trouble and unchristian invective. You have already anticipated my theme — it is DOMESTIC SLAVERY. It must be confessed that this is the most difficult and delicate of all topics to be agitated by a Northerner and a Southerner, and yet I have the fullest confidence that neither of us will give or take offence. I need offer you no apology for calling your attention to this subject at the present time. Not only is it a theme of vast importance in itself, involving, either directly or indirectly, in-

terests most dear to you and to me, and to every one who has at heart the welfare of his country and his race, but it is a subject that must be discussed, — there is no avoiding it, however much you or I or other individuals may desire it. It has come before the public mind in such a manner as peremptorily to demand the attention of every Christian and every patriot. Whether we approve or deprecate the peculiar causes that have made this topic so prominent in our country, both North and South, we have to take things as they are, and turn them to the best possible account. Politicians and demagogues are all discussing American slavery, and will continue to do so for the purpose of forwarding their own favorite schemes; and any attempt to silence them would be as futile as an effort to arrest the gulf-stream in its course. It remains only for brethren, both at the South and North, to take up the subject as we find it brought to our hands in the inscrutable providence of God, and, under the guidance of his Spirit, given in answer to our prayers, take a truly Christian view of some of its leading features, and then inquire, What is duty? I think you will not claim, with some of your southern friends, that slavery is a subject with which we at the North “have nothing to do.” As patriots, we

have something to do with every thing that affects the interests of our common country; and as Christians, we sustain responsibilities which we cannot shake off toward all our brethren of the human family, whether it be at the North or South — whether they be bond or free. “Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?” “We are many members, but one body, and whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

Your candor will not impute to me any unkind or improper motive in entering upon this discussion; and you will permit me, in the outset, to enter a few disclaimers, in order that you may be the better able to appreciate what I have to say.

In the first place, it is not my design to throw down the glove for the purpose of enlisting you, or any of your friends, in a controversy; this would be an unpleasant and profitless undertaking.

Nor is it to advocate the doctrine, that sustaining the legal relation of master to a slave for a longer or shorter time is in all possible cases sin. I will admit that there may be circumstances in which the relation may subsist without any moral delinquency whatever; as, for instance,

persons may become slaveholders in the eye of the law without their own consent, as by heirship; they sometimes become so voluntarily to befriend a fellow-creature in distress, to prevent his being sold away from his wife and family; persons sometimes purchase slaves for the sole purpose of emancipating them. In these, and other circumstances which might be mentioned, no reasonable man either North or South would ever think of pronouncing the relation a sinful one.

Nor is it my design to question the conscientiousness or piety of all slaveholders at the South, both among the laity and clergy. Whoever makes the sweeping assertion, that "no slaveholder can be a child of God," gives fearful evidence that he himself is deficient in that "charity" which "hopeth all things." There is an obvious distinction between those who hold slaves for merely selfish purposes and regard them as chattels, and those who repudiate this system, and regard them as men having in common with themselves human rights, and would gladly emancipate them were there not legal obstacles, and could they do it consistently with their welfare, temporal and eternal.

Nor is it my purpose to advocate immediate, universal, unconditional emancipation without

regard to circumstances. This doctrine is not held by the great mass of northern Christians. There are, no doubt, some cases where immediate emancipation would inflict sad calamities, both upon the slaves themselves and the community. The opinions of northern men have often been misunderstood and misrepresented on this subject. The ground that calm, reflecting opponents of slavery take, is, that slaveholders should at once cease in their own minds to regard their slaves as chattels to be bought and sold and worked for mere profit, and that they should take immediate measures for the full emancipation of every one, as soon as may be consistent with his greatest good, and that of the community in which he lives.

This, it is true, is virtually immediate emancipation; for it is at once giving up the chattel principle, and no longer regarding servants as property to be bought and sold. It is to act on the Christian principle of impartial love, doing to them and with them, as, in a change of circumstances, we would have them do to and with us. This does immediately abolish, as it should do, the main thing in slavery, and brings those who are now bondmen into the common brotherhood of human beings, to be treated, not as chattels and brutes, but on Christian princi-

ples, according to the exigencies of their condition as ignorant, degraded, and dependent human beings, "endowed, however, by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," which rights should be acknowledged, and with the least possible delay be granted.

Nor is it my design to reproach my southern brethren as being to blame for the origin of slavery in these United States. Slavery was introduced into this country by our fathers, who have long been sleeping in their graves, and the North, if they did not as extensively, yet did as truly, and in many cases did as heartily, participate in it, as the South; so that, in respect to the origin of American slavery, we have not a word to say, nor a stone to cast. And besides, our mother country must come in and share with our fathers to no small extent in the wrong of introducing domestic slavery to these colonies. Happily, as we think, slavery was virtually abolished at the North by our ancestors of a preceding generation; but for their act we are entitled to no credit. Your ancestors omitted to do this; but for their omission you are deserving of no blame. We would never forget, that slavery was entailed upon our southern brethren, and for this entailment they are no more respon-

sible than for the blood that circulates in their veins.

If you will be so kind as to keep these disclaimers in mind, I think you will better understand and appreciate what I shall hereafter say on the subject. With the kindest wishes for you and yours, I remain, in the best of bonds,

YOUR CHRISTIAN BROTHER.

LETTER III.

THE REAL SUBJECT. — NOT TO BE CONFOUNDED WITH ANCIENT
SERVITUDE. — NOR TO BE JUDGED OF BY ISOLATED CASES.
— NORTHERN MEN COMPETENT AS OTHERS TO DETERMINE ITS
TRUE CHARACTER. — SLAVERY IGNORES OUR DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE. — IS INCONSISTENT WITH OUR CONSTITUTION.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,— I propose in this and subsequent letters to take a brief, candid view of some of the prominent characteristics of American slavery. I speak of servitude, not as it existed in patriarchal times, for that is essentially a distinct matter. While it had some things in common with American slavery, there was so much that was dissimilar in the relation of master and servant, that analogy is in a great measure destroyed.

Neither do I speak of slavery as I saw it developed on your plantation, and on those of your immediate neighbors. When I went to the South, I confess I went with strong prepossessions, (prejudices if you choose so to call them,)

against the "peculiar institution." I regarded it an evil, and only an evil. But while my general views of the legitimate workings of the system remain unchanged, candor compels me to admit, that, if all slaves were as well cared for, as kindly treated, as well instructed, and were they all as contented and happy as yours; and, especially, were there no evils incident to the system greater than I saw with you, I would simply divest slavery of its odious name, and it would virtually be slavery no longer. The plantations at the South would then, perhaps, with some propriety be denominated communities of intelligent, happy, Christian peasants. And yet it is slavery, as it really takes away inalienable rights. Would to God that slavery as it exists with you were a fair illustration of the system. But alas! it is not. Perhaps you may say that "it is impossible for a northern man to speak of slavery so as to do the subject justice." You may indeed know more and better than we do about the state and condition of the slaves. But in some respects, where great principles are involved, we at the North are more competent than you, for our judgment is less liable to be biased by self-interest; and in my remarks I shall confine myself chiefly to those points on which a northern man is at least as well qualified to speak as a slaveholder.

What, then, are some of the prominent characteristics of American slavery as a system?

FIRST, Slavery ignores and repudiates the foundation-stone on which rests our renowned Declaration of Independence. That document, for more than three fourths of a century, has been the boast and glory of America. It is the platform on which our noble ancestors planted their feet, with a consciousness that they stood on the eternal principles of truth and justice. To maintain these principles, relying on God for aid, they pledged to each other "their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor." Our fathers knew that they were right, and, to carry out the principles embodied in this Declaration, many of them cheerfully poured out their heart's blood to defend the "unalienable rights" of humanity.

Now let us turn our attention to the foundation paragraph of this memorable Declaration;—I do not mean in that general way in which it is often read, but minutely and particularly;—let us calmly look at it in its full import, and not shrink back and avert our eyes on account of a foreboding that we shall be led to conclusions which we would be glad to avoid.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident;—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights;

that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

These significant words are inscribed upon the scroll of our nation's history, and there they will remain till time shall be no longer. They need no glossary or explanation. He who runs may read them, and he who reads can understand them. The sentiment they embody it is impossible to mistake ; it stands out in bold relief, like the sun in the heavens. It is, that every man has received, from a higher than earthly power, a charter, which secures to him the unalienable right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is impossible for the most ultra advocate of "human rights" to paraphrase these words, or give them a rendering so as to make them support his dogmas more strongly than they now do. On the contrary, he would only weaken their force by the attempt.

Now, my dear brother, I would candidly, seriously ask you — I would ask all your southern friends — I would ask everybody, Can the sentiment of that Declaration be consistent with American slavery? Are not slaves men? Do color and degradation change a creature of God from a human being to a soulless brute? No; our southern brethren would as indignantly repudiate this infidel view as we at the North.

Now if a slave is a man, he has received from his Creator an unalienable right to liberty if he chooses to avail himself of it, or else the first principle laid down in our revered Declaration of Independence, so far from being "self evident," is in fact untrue, and ought at once to be taken from its honored position in the archives of these United States, and consigned to the heaps of rubbish of the dark ages.

But does the slave enjoy this liberty? or is it within his reach? It will not be pretended. The very name by which his class is designated forbids it. The term free slave is a solecism. His liberty consists in the freedom to do as he is told to do, or suffer punishment for his disobedience, and he can pursue happiness only in accordance with the will of his master.

There is the same incongruity between slavery and that clause in our constitution which stipulates that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Now, my brother, does it not require considerable ingenuity and special pleading to avoid conclusions to which unbiased common sense would arrive in an instant, in the application of these declared rights to persons held as slaves? I am not going to inflict upon you a dissertation, or a series of syllogisms on this hackneyed

subject, but I beg that you and your friends will calmly look again at what, I doubt not, you have seen before, — the palpable incongruity between the system of holding persons perpetually in slavery without their consent, and those declared, self-evident, heaven bestowed, unalienable rights professedly secured to all men in these United States by our glorious constitution. Said that great statesman and patriot, Henry Clay: "We present to the world the sorry spectacle of a nation that worships Slavery as a household goddess, after having constituted Liberty the presiding divinity over church and state."

Surely something must be out of joint here. I have looked again and again at this matter, I think with perfect candor, and I have tried to the utmost of my ability to reconcile these apparent inconsistencies, but I cannot do it. Can you?

Believe me, as ever, your sincere friend and

CHRISTIAN BROTHER.

LETTER IV.

SLAVERY TRANSFORMS MEN TO CHATTELS.—SOUTHERN LAWS.—
SLAVE-AUCTIONS.—MEN PLACED ON A LEVEL WITH BRUTES.—
NO REDRESS FOR WRONGS.—IGNORANCE PERPETUATED BY
LAW.

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIEND, — A second characteristic of American slavery is, It regards human beings, declared to be in the "image of God," as "chattels," — things or articles of merchandise. "Slaves," say the laws of South Carolina and Georgia, "shall be deemed, sold, taken, reputed, and adjudged in law to be chattels personal in the hands of their owners and possessors, and their executors, administrators and assigns, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever." * "A slave," says the code of Louisiana, "is one who is in the power of his master, to whom he belongs. The master may sell him, dispose of his person, his

* See 2 Brevard's Digest, 229; Prince's Digest, 446.

industry, and his labor; he can do nothing, possess nothing, nor acquire any thing, but what must belong to his master." *

Thus, rational, immortal beings, children of our common Father in heaven, are taken from the exalted scale in which God placed them, and degraded to that of the brute creation. They are, as you know, advertised, mortgaged, attached, inherited, leased, bought, and sold like horses and cattle. Like them they are brought to the auction block, and like them subjected to a rigid examination as to their age, and soundness of wind, chest, and limb. Said a gentleman to me: "When I was at —, I visited the slave mart; and as I saw one and another and another of my fellow-beings brought forward to the block, and rudely exposed and minutely examined, in order to ascertain their marketable value in dollars and cents, and then struck off to the highest bidder, amid the gibes and jeers of the vulgar, my heart was nigh unto bursting, and I was obliged to turn away my eyes and weep, exclaiming, O God! can it be! thy children! my brothers and sisters of humanity,—perhaps my fellow-heirs of heaven,—precious souls for whom the Saviour died, whose names

* Civil Code, Art. 35.

may be written in the Book of Life, and over whose repentance angels may have rejoiced! Can it be?"

For myself, I never witnessed any such scenes, and heaven grant I never may. It is enough, and too much for me to know, that they exist. I allude to them in this connection, not to awaken and pain your sensibilities, but simply to illustrate the fact, that American slavery sanctions them, and by its operation brings down the noblest work of God to a level of the beasts that perish. As far as it can do so, it dehumanizes man, and treats him as a thing without a soul. It may be remarked, however, in passing, "A man's a man, for a' that."

I might speak in this connection of the obstacles which are thrown in the way of the slave's obtaining redress for his wrongs should he unfortunately get into the hands of a cruel and unreasonable master, being forbidden to defend himself, and not allowed the testimony of his brethren to be given in his behalf; but there are other features of this system which more urgently demand our attention.

Neither will I dwell upon the ignorance and mental degradation which are an essential part of the system. You need not be informed, that, in ten States, knowledge is kept from the slave

by legal enactments, — that teaching him to read is regarded a crime, to be severely “punished by the judges.” I was happy to find that you and a great many others totally disregard that law and, in spite of legislators and penal statutes you teach your slaves to read, and in some cases to write. For this *crime*, I doubt not but heaven, at least, will forgive you. I shall allude to this latter topic again in a future letter.

Most truly and affectionately, yours, etc.

LETTER V.

DOMESTIC LIFE. — THE MARRIAGE RELATION. — DOMESTIC HAPPINESS A RELIC OF PARADISE. — ITS ENDEARMENTS. — ITS VALUE. — THE BARBARISM OF INVADING THE DOMESTIC SANCTUARY. — AN ILLUSTRATION.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — I come now, in the third place, to speak of slavery as it is related to the endearments and duties of domestic life. On this subject my heart is full. I am almost afraid to speak, lest I say what I ought not; and yet I cannot keep silence. I can, in a good measure, sympathize with Elihu when he said, —

“For I am full of words,
The spirit within me doth constrain me,
Behold I am as wine which hath no vent,
I am ready to burst like new bottles,
I will speak that I may breathe more freely,
I will open my lips and reply.” *

We now approach a topic more intimately

* Job ch. 32, v. 17-20, Barnes's translation.

connected with the present and future happiness of the human race than almost any other. Man was not completely blest, even in Eden, until God instituted the marriage relation. His Creator gave him a companion to participate in his joys, binding them together by ties which no human power might sunder. Paradise was lost by sin, but as our first parents were exiled thence, God in infinite kindness permitted them to take one of its purest, sweetest sources of joy with them to this world of sorrows.

“Domestic happiness! thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall!”

You, my dear brother, are a husband and a father, and can appreciate my meaning, when I speak of the richness, the tenderness, the depth, of connubial and paternal love; how it lights up this dark world with smiles, — how it stimulates us to manly exertion, — how it lightens the burdens of human life, and enables us cheerfully to sustain its ills, while it almost restores to us Eden itself. To understand what is meant by the term domestic happiness, it is necessary for you and me only to look at the circles around our own firesides, and listen to the musical accents of the loved ones who dwell there, as they pronounce the words husband, father, mother,

brother, sister, and exchange with them kind looks and the affectionate embrace. What earthly joys can be compared with those of home? What would tempt us to part with them? All the gold in California and Australia would be spurned in contempt, if offered in exchange. What should we say, and what should we do, were any power on earth to interfere with our fireside delights, and attempt to wrest them from us?

Suppose Providence had cast our lot under a despotic government, which we will suppose to be for the most part kind and paternal, but having this peculiarity,—every now and then, finding its finances embarrassed, it should be in the habit of selling some of its subjects to a foreign power to strengthen its exchequer, and should arbitrarily select its victims from this family and that;—how should you feel were the doomed family your own? What would have been your emotions this morning, had some one come to your room and told you that that bright-eyed boy, “Willie,” who last night sat upon your knee and amused you with his innocent prattle, showed you his toys, examined your pockets, played with your hair and features, and finally clasped his little arms around your neck and impressed the “good-night” kiss upon your lips,

had been seized by an officer, and sold from your sight forever to you know not whom, and to be carried you know not whither? Nay, more;—suppose that while he was yet speaking, there came also another with the tidings that the same fate had befallen your first-born,—your daughter, just budding into womanhood,—the affectionate, joyous, light-hearted “Kate,” whose voice to your ear is sweeter than the music of flowing waters, whose feet are swifter than those of the light gazelle, as with open arms she bounds to meet you on your return from a temporary absence, to welcome you home with a tear of joy in her eye and a kiss upon her lips,—that she too had been by the officials of the government clandestinely abducted from your dwelling, and sold, literally sold, for a valuation put upon her person in dollars and cents, to a hopeless captivity, to spend her days in unrequited toil, or, not unlikely, in ministering to the caprices and brutal passions of a stranger?

And while he was yet speaking, and as your *wife*, half frantic with grief and terror, was entwining her arms around you, and you were striving to ease your bursting heart, to crown the whole, suppose another official and his posse had entered your apartment, and by force of arms had torn her from your embrace, and with

things upon her hands, and a bandage over her mouth, hurried her away to greet your sight no more? What a scene! There go in one direction the children of your body, "bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh," to an unknown but fearful destiny! In another is ruthlessly borne the object dearer to you than all the world beside, — one whom you had solemnly sworn to love, cherish, and protect until death, — the light of your dwelling, — the mother of your children, — the mutual sharer of all your joys and sorrows, — the richest and most precious treasure heaven ever gave you! — there she goes in an agony of woe, to toil under a burning sun, compelled to call another man her husband, or, it may be, to grace her master's seraglio! Merciful God! what meaneth this? What horde of barbarians from the dark corners of the earth have found their way hither to lay waste all that is beautiful and lovely! What fiend from the pit has been let loose to enter this little Paradise to destroy and bear away all the good that was left of the primitive Eden!

No ruthless band of barbarians from benighted lands have found their way to this Christian domestic sanctuary, — no malignant spirit from below has been here to snatch the only type of Heaven that escaped his grasp six thousand

years ago. "Think it not strange," brother, "concerning this fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened to you." This is only the legitimate working of the patriarchal system of government under which we live. Be calm, — this is all done according to law, and with as much kindness as the circumstances will permit. No stripes are inflicted, and no more force is exerted than is absolutely necessary to secure the object, and prevent a useless outcry; no ill-will is entertained toward the victims of these outrages, — it is only because the finances of the government are low, and must be replenished, and this is the most convenient, and perhaps at present the only practical, way of raising the money!

Now, my brother, what should you and I think of living under a government where such things were permitted by the laws? It would not reconcile us to the administration to be told, that such proceedings as I have supposed are of rare occurrence, and that the general character of the government is kind, that it dislikes exceedingly to sell its subjects, and especially that it has a great repugnance to separating husbands and wives, and breaking up of families, and does it only when severely pressed by pecuniary necessity. To your and my mind this would be altogether unsatisfactory; it would not change our opinion of

the system. No matter if the heart-rending scene I have supposed were witnessed only once a year, or once in ten years,—I think we should loudly protest against a system which allowed the occurrence of it at all.

You will please, my dear sir, apply the foregoing illustration to the liabilities and actual workings of the slave system at the South, just so far as it is applicable, and no further. If there are any points in which the analogy fails, I will thank you to point them out to me in your next.

With much love and esteem,

I remain yours, most truly.

LETTER VI.

SACREDNESS OF THE MARRIAGE RELATION. — GOD ALONE CAN DISSOLVE IT. — THE "HIGHER LAW." — SLAVERY SANCTIONS POLYGAMY AND ADULTERY. — RELATION OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN. — FEARFUL RESPONSIBILITY ASSUMED.

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN BROTHER, — My objections to any system of government that interferes at will with the family relation, and forcibly separates husbands and wives, parents and children, do not arise chiefly from the personal wrongs and bitter woes inflicted upon its victims. A contemplation of these is calculated to affect our sensibilities, and excite the tender sympathies of our nature; but there is a more enlarged Christian view which forces itself upon us. If we could by some magic process allay the anguish of the stricken heart, and heal its wounds when the strongest ties of nature are rent asunder, — could we even obliterate the susceptibilities of the soul, destroy natural affection, and render man more callous than the brutes, so

that he could be torn from his home and kindred with less pain than they, — in a *moral* point of view the case would be altered but little. As I have remarked in a previous letter, the *marriage relation* was instituted by God, and he made it indissoluble. “What God hath joined together let not man put asunder,” is the language of “holy writ;” and whoever, for any cause which God himself has not specified, breaks up this relation, encroaches upon God’s prerogative, and goes directly in face of his positive commands. Much has been said of late, seriously, sarcastically, and contemptuously, about a “higher law;” but notwithstanding the improper use often made of that term, there is an important sense in which you, and I, and every Christian recognize what that term implies. If, on any subject whatever, human enactments do obviously conflict with the enactments of God, then God’s law is the “*higher*,” and must be obeyed. To deny this is worse than infidelity.

Now, brother, does not the system of slavery in the United States tolerate, and even authorize, the forcible rending asunder of the marriage tie? Are not husbands, not seldom, but often, sold from their wives, and wives from their husbands, and new matrimonial alliances formed by them, with consent and encouragement of

their masters? Thus is flagrant adultery sanctioned in nearly one half of the States of this Christian Republic, and in some cases the crime is almost, if not quite, forced upon the wretched perpetrators of it. When God's law is disregarded, and an ordinance on which depends all we hold dear in social and Christian life is trampled in the dust by an institution existing in the midst of us, what shall we say? If slavery were a question merely of expediency, political economy, or even personal wrong and suffering, it would be easier to keep silence; but when God is dishonored, and gross sin sanctioned by law, is it not the duty of his children, North and South, to enter their solemn, earnest, decided protestations? You will agree with me, that no Christian can or ought to acquiesce in what, either directly or indirectly, violates a positive divine precept; and against what shall he remonstrate, if not against a system that encourages polygamy and legalizes adultery? *

* It is sometimes said that the crime of adultery is neither perpetrated nor encouraged by the breaking up of slave-families, because, generally, the connections formed are not truly marriage, not being solemnized according to forms of law, and hence the marriage obligation *cannot* be violated.

It may be replied, if this be so, it presents slavery in a worse light still, for it encourages and perpetuates a state of universal concubinage. But it is *not* so. When a slave

There is another view in which the operation of the system of slavery, in breaking up families, has affected my mind powerfully and painfully. Parents sustain most important relations to their children, as well as to each other. Who can be so much interested in the temporal and eternal well-being of the child as those by whose instrumentality he had his existence? Who has so much influence over him, or who could direct his feet in the way he should go, so well? God has imposed upon all parents most important duties, which they may not neglect. These duties are as truly incumbent on the slave-parent as on the master who sustains the same relation. It may be, indeed, extensively true that he does not understand them, and is in a great measure incompetent to discharge them; and that often the child suffers nothing morally or intellectually by being removed from his influence. But this results in a great measure from the hopeless ignorance in which the parent is involved. There are, however, as you can bear witness,

takes a companion, and they consent and engage to live together as husband and wife until death, and they thus declare their intentions before others, whether any legal form is gone through or not, they are as truly "no more twain but one flesh" as were Adam and Eve. It has been thus decided by our courts in regard to white persons.

multitudes of exceptions. In how many cases are slave-parents truly pious and intelligent, and feel as much solicitude for the eternal interests of their children, as you do for yours, and pray with them as frequently and as fervently. With how much pleasure did you and I listen to your "Jamie," one time when we were taking an evening stroll past his cabin, and overheard his family prayer. With what simplicity and earnestness did he pour out his soul to God for the salvation of his "dear children." And do you not remember, too, how with equal importunity he prayed God to "bless dear kind Massa and Missus, and dere precious children, and also Massa's friend, and dat all may meet to praise Jesus togedder in heaven," and how we found it difficult to speak for a minute or two, and how the big tear-drops stood in our eyes, and we could n't help it?

You told me there were a great many "Jamies" at the South, and I have no doubt of it; they love their little ones as well, and who so competent to train them up for Christ? Who will presume to step in between these parents and their children and say, this family altar shall be broken down, and those who have bowed around it shall be separated, to meet no more till they meet at the judgment? Who will peril his

own soul by taking those children away from such an influence, and for a pecuniary consideration cast them upon the wide world with none to instruct them, and none to care or pray for them, except their heart-broken parents whom they have left behind? I would not do it, neither would you, for the wealth of the world; and yet, is it not often done? In speaking of this subject, one of the most eminent southern divines* uses the following language: "Slavery, as it exists among us, sets up between parents and their children an authority higher than the impulse of nature and the laws of God; breaks up the authority of the father over his own offspring, and at pleasure separates the mother at a returnless distance from her child, thus outraging all decency and justice." I shall refer to the sentiments of this brother again.

I remain as ever,

Affectionately yours, etc.

* Rev. R. I. Breckenridge, D. D.

LETTER VII.

THE CROWNING EVIL OF SLAVERY. — PRECIOUSNESS OF THE BIBLE. — OUR CHART AND COMPASS ON LIFE'S VOYAGE INDISPENSABLE. — ORAL INSTRUCTIONS INSUFFICIENT. — DANGERS. — SHIPWRECK ALMOST INEVITABLE. — WITHHELD FROM THE SLAVE. — SHUTS MULTITUDES OUT OF HEAVEN. — AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY. — TESTIMONY OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY. — OF SYNOD OF KENTUCKY. — OF DR. BRECKENRIDGE.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — There is one feature of slavery, fourthly, which gives me more pain by far than any other, and I may say more than all others put together, and that is, it imperils the immortal souls of millions of our fellow-beings by keeping from them the Word of God.

Next to the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, the most precious gift God has bestowed on man is the Bible. This volume contains our only perfect rule of life, and is our only guide to heaven. It teaches us our character and our destiny; it alone raises the curtain between time and eternity, and dissipates the darkness that otherwise would forever enshroud the grave; it reveals to

us another state of being, in which we shall be happy or miserable, ages without end. On this Book alone do we depend for our knowledge of the way of salvation by Christ. It is here we read the story of the manger and the cross, and the wonderful plan of redemption through atoning blood. What could we do without the Bible? It is of infinitely greater value than houses and lands, silver and gold, and every earthly good beside. To take from us the Bible, would be like blotting out the sun in the heavens, and enveloping the universe in the gloom and darkness of eternal night. Take from me riches, honors, pleasures, comforts, and even liberty itself; and give me instead thereof poverty, disgrace, pains, affliction, hunger, cold, nakedness, and a dungeon; tear me from my friends, bind me with chains, scourge me with the lash, brand my flesh with hot irons, deprive me of every source of earthly good, and inflict upon me every kind of bodily and mental anguish which the utmost refinement of cruelty can invent;—but give me my Bible—leave me this precious treasure, which is the gift of my heavenly Father, to teach me his will and guide me to himself. Torture and destroy my body, if you will, but O! give me facilities for saving my soul. Turn me not adrift on life's troubled ocean to seek

alone a far distant shore, exposed continually to storms, breakers, hidden reefs, whirlpools, and shoals, with nothing but a few verbal instructions to direct my way. If I am to make this fearful voyage, (and make it I must,) take not from me my chart and compass. Your verbal directions I shall be likely to forget when I most need them. The polestar, which you tell me may be my guide, is often for a long time concealed by impenetrable clouds. There are fearful maelstroms, near the verge of whose deceptive and destructive circles my course lies, and ere I am aware of it I shall have passed the fatal line, from which no voyager returns. Between me and my desired haven there is a "hell-gate," where are sunken rocks and conflicting currents, and amid all these complicated dangers my frail bark will make shipwreck, without my chart and compass. Deprived of these, I cannot keep my reckoning, I cannot shape my course, I cannot find my haven.

I need not tell you, my dear brother, that it is a part of the slaveholding policy to take from thousands and millions of immortal beings in our nominally Christian land, this precious chart and compass,—the Bible, the only safe guide to heaven. I have often heard you speak of it,

and deplore it. Those severe laws which forbid teaching the slave to read, do virtually take from him the Bible, — his directory to the New Jerusalem. You may, indeed, give him oral instruction, and in many instances, no doubt, they are blessed to his conversion; but how utterly inadequate are they to his spiritual wants, how imperfect are they at best, and in how many thousands of cases are even these entirely wanting. Every enlightened and intelligent Christian knows, from his own experience, how hard it is to enter the “strait gate,” and to keep in the “narrow way,” and how needful to him are all the helps within his reach, and then he is but “scarcely saved.” What hope is there, then, for the poor slave, who is deprived, not only of most of the ordinary and extraordinary means of grace which we enjoy, but is forbidden the printed Word of God? Is not a fearful responsibility incurred by those who, for any reason, stand between God and his children, and intercept those messages of grace and mercy which are contained in the Holy Scriptures?

That noble institution, the American Bible Society, is multiplying copies of the sacred Word by thousands and hundreds of thousands, and scattering them over the land and the world; it hesitates not to thrust them into the hands of the fol-

lowers of the false prophet, — the deluded followers of the man of sin, — the disciples of Confucius and Zoroaster, — the worshippers of Jugger-naut and Vishnoo, and the degraded inhabitants of the South Seas and Caffraria; — it benevolently resolves to put a copy of the Bible into the dwelling of every white family in these United States; but it is obliged by law to pass by the cabin of the slave, and leave more than three millions of immortal beings to find the road to heaven the best way they can.

My brother, I cannot think of these things without the deepest grief, and I know that you fully sympathize with me; but it is some consolation to believe that the great mass of evangelical Christians take the same views of the wrongs inflicted upon the slave that we do, for it is to the Christian sentiment of this country that we must look for the removal of them.

Our brethren of the Presbyterian church have borne their testimony most fully and pointedly against the evils of slavery which we have been considering. You doubtless recollect the action of the General Assembly on this subject in 1818. A committee was appointed, to whom was referred certain resolutions on the subject of selling a slave, — a member of the church, — and which was directed to prepare a report to be adopted

by the Assembly, expressing their opinion in general on the subject of slavery. The report of this committee was unanimously adopted, and ordered to be published. It is, in part, as follows:—

“The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, having taken into consideration the subject of slavery, think proper to make known their sentiments upon it to the churches.

“We consider the voluntary enslaving of the one part of the human race by another, as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbors as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Christ, which enjoins that all things ‘whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’ Slavery creates a paradox in the moral system; it exhibits rational, accountable, and immortal beings in such circumstances as scarcely to leave them the power of moral action. It exhibits them as dependent on the will of others, whether they shall receive religious instruction; whether they shall know and worship the true God; whether they shall enjoy the ordinances of the gospel; whether they shall perform the duties and cherish the endear-

ments of husbands and wives, parents and children, neighbors and friends; whether they shall preserve their chastity and purity, or regard the dictates of justice and humanity.

“Such are some of the consequences of slavery, — consequences, not imaginary, but which connect themselves with its very existence. The evils to which the slave is always exposed often take place in fact, and in their very worst degree and form, and where all of them do not take place, as we rejoice to say that in many instances, through the influence of the principles of humanity and religion on the minds of masters, they do not, still the slave is deprived of his natural right, degraded as a human being, and exposed to the danger of passing into the hands of a master who may inflict upon him all the hardships which inhumanity and avarice may suggest.”

An Address from the Synod of Kentucky, in 1835, to the Presbyterians of that State, is much more specific in its delineations of the evils of slavery, and in its denunciations of the system, and adopts language far more severe than many northern Christians would think it expedient to use. It presents a picture of its actual workings which could be drawn only by one who had seen the original. If you have not read this address, I beg that you will do so. It is altogether a

southern document. I have room only for a short extract.

Slavery is characterized as "a demoralizing and cruel system, which it would be an insult to God to imagine that he does not abhor; a system which exhibits power without responsibility, toil without recompense, life without liberty, law without justice, wrongs without redress, infamy without crime, punishment without guilt, and families without marriage; a system which will not only make victims of the present unhappy generation, inflicting upon them the degradation, the contempt, the lassitude, and the anguish of hopeless oppression; but which even aims at transmitting this heritage of injury and woe to their children and their children's children, down to their latest posterity. Can any Christian contemplate, without trembling, his own agency in the perpetuation of such a system?"

Coincident with the judgment of these two most respectable and revered ecclesiastical bodies is the testimony of one of the most prominent and honored sons of the southern church, the Rev. Dr. R. L. Breckenridge. Says he:—

"What then is slavery? for the question relates to the action of certain principles of it, and to its probable and proper results; what is slavery as it

exists among us? We reply, it is that condition enforced by the laws of one half of the States of this confederacy, in which one portion of the community, called masters, are allowed such power over another portion called slaves, as —

“1. To deprive them of the entire earnings of their own labor, except so much as is necessary to continue labor itself by continuing healthful existence: thus committing clear robbery.

“2. To reduce them to the necessity of universal concubinage, by denying to them the civil rights of marriage, thus breaking up the dearest relations of life, and encouraging universal prostitution.

“3. To deprive them of the means and opportunities of moral and intellectual culture, in many States making it a high penal offence to teach them to read, thus perpetuating whatever of evil there is that proceeds from ignorance.

“4. To set up between parents and their children an authority higher than the impulse of nature and the laws of God, which breaks up the authority of the father over his own offspring, and at pleasure separates the mother at a returnless distance from her child, thus abrogating the clearest laws of nature, thus outraging all decency and justice, and degrading and oppressing thou-

sands upon thousands of beings, created like themselves in the image of the most high God! This is slavery as it is daily exhibited in every slave State."

Yes, such is the nature and character of an institution in this enlightened Christian republic, claiming to be the freest nation on earth, calling itself "an asylum for the oppressed," inviting the downtrodden subjects of all the despots of the old world to come to this happy land, and place themselves under the protection of the American eagle, and in this "eyrie of the free" taste and enjoy the sweets of liberty!

The views presented in the above extracts may be taken, it is to be presumed, as an exponent of the southern Christian sentiment on domestic slavery. There are, indeed, exceptions. It is painful to notice that within a few years some men of reputed piety and worth have been attempting to maintain that American slavery is a "divine and patriarchal institution," "sanctioned by the Bible,"—is "necessary to the highest state of society," and is "to be perpetuated;" but I am happy to believe that the number of those who hold such views, repudiating those of the Presbyterian church, and at the same time call themselves disciples of Him who said, "what-

soever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," is comparatively small.

I close this long letter by subscribing myself,
as ever,

Your affectionate

Friend and Brother.

LETTER VIII

THREE QUESTIONS SUGGESTED. — 1. MUST SLAVERY BE PERPETUAL? — 2. DOES THE CHURCH OF CHRIST SUSTAIN ANY RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS MATTER? — 3. WHAT SHALL WE DO?

MY DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIEND, — I fear I shall make myself tedious to you by dwelling so long upon this, to me, painful subject, — slavery. I will, therefore, in the present letter, finish what I have to say for the present, hoping that our future correspondence may be on more grateful themes.

There are a few questions which are suggested to us by the brief view we have taken of this most important subject. The first is, Must slavery, with all its attendant evils, be perpetuated? Must this blot rest upon our beloved country, and tarnish its escutcheon forever? I am persuaded that the spontaneous answer from the Christian heart of this nation is, *No!* It was never contemplated by Washington nor Jefferson nor Adams, nor by the framers of our Constitution, nor by the great mass of noble patriots who

perilled their all for the independence of their country, that slavery was to be handed down to posterity. If you will look at the writings of the leading public men of the last century, you will find, that, almost without exception, they looked upon slavery in the United States as a temporary evil, to be removed as soon as circumstances would permit. They regarded it not only a wrong inflicted upon the slave, but an incubus upon the nation, soon to pass away.

The great body of Christians in our land have been looking forward to the time, and praying for its arrival, when all the oppressed within our borders shall go free. That the time will come when slavery shall cease in our land, I as fully believe as I believe that there is a God who presides over and directs the destinies of men. You and I may not live to see the day; but it will come.

Another question suggested is, Does the church of Christ in this country sustain any responsibility in regard to slavery, and has she any duty to discharge in relation to it? By the church of Christ, I mean the great mass of Christians of every name who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, both North and South.

This question is easily answered. There are no evils existing in the Christian's field of labor—

the world — in regard to which he has not some responsibility, and for the removal of which he is not bound to do something. As a general truth, the nearer the evils come to our own fire-sides and bosoms, the weightier those responsibilities become. The hundreds of millions of heathens in foreign lands lying in sin and degradation appeal to our sympathy and efforts, and that appeal we may not disregard. But the heathen in our own land have on us much stronger claims, and our obligations to put forth efforts in their behalf are more imperious.

Slavery is a great evil and sin, which affects not only individuals, but our country; and, both as Christians and patriots, we ought to be sensibly alive to every thing that affects our common weal. You who live at the South, it may be, have more responsibility in this matter than we at the North; but none of us can say, "because I am not personally implicated in inflicting wrongs upon the slave, therefore I have nothing to do for their removal." Should this become the universal sentiment of the church, Satan's kingdom in our world would never come to an end, and wickedness would prevail forever. The spirit of Christianity, although preëminently mild, gentle, patient, and long-suffering, is nevertheless, in an important

sense, aggressive. It has ever claimed the right of interesting itself in the welfare of every human creature — to exert its influence to check the progress of sin in every form — to attack error in principle and in practice — to “loose the bands of wickedness,” — “undo heavy burdens,” — “break every yoke,” — “deliver the poor and needy,” — and to “remember them that are in bonds as bound with them.” This, by some, may be called officiousness, but we cannot help it; it is a part of the Christian’s legitimate business to volunteer his influence and his services (in every proper way) in opposing wrong, and to stand up and plead the cause of those who suffer it the world over. He cannot refrain from doing so, without proving himself false to his Master and his Master’s cause.

Admitting, then, that all Christians have some kind of responsibility and duty devolving on them, a most important question comes up. Thirdly, what shall they do? There are certainly some things which it is perfectly evident we should not do, — though we should rebuke this and every sin, we should not give vent to our hatred of the system in ebullitions of wrath, invective, and abuse toward slaveholders. Thus did not

Christ nor his apostles. This is not in accordance with the Christian spirit, and could be productive only of evil.

Neither should we endeavor to exert an influence over the slaves to make them restive and disobedient; none but an enemy to the true interests, both of the slave and his country, would do that, unless under some hallucination.

Neither should we interfere politically with slavery beyond the boundaries of our own State, in States where it now exists by the laws of the land. I might go on indefinitely, and specify what we should not do; but this does not meet the case; — what shall we do? It would be arrogance in me to attempt a full answer to a question that has engaged the attention of many abler heads and better hearts than mine, but there are some things which have already been said by others, that cannot be too frequently repeated.

In the first place, we can commit this whole matter to God in humble, earnest prayer. Here is something which we can all do, North and South, and in which we shall all be agreed. However much we may differ in regard to the safety and expediency of other measures to moderate the condition of the slave and bring about his ultimate emancipation, we are of one mind in regard to the safety and efficacy of

prayer. One effect of this will be to unite our own hearts more closely in sympathy and love. There will be no danger of calling each other hard names, bandying unchristian epithets, and biting and devouring one another, if we are in the habit of meeting daily at the throne of grace to pray for a cause in which we take a mutual interest.

By prayer we may hope to be enlightened more fully in regard to our duty. "If any man lack wisdom," and surely we all do on this subject, "let him ask of God."

In answer to prayer, we have reason to hope that God will open the eyes to teach the hearts of all slaveholders, and lead them to "do justly and love mercy," and also that he will, in his holy and wise Providence, redress the wrongs of his oppressed children, and prepare the way for their ultimate emancipation.

Prayer is the Christian's first and last resort. Let us, then, my dear brother, pray over this subject continuously, and with an earnestness commensurate with its importance, and then, I doubt not, we shall ourselves be more enlightened than we now are as to our future course.

A second duty, hardly less obvious than prayer, is to use all the influence we possess to prevent the extension of the domain of slavery. To this

end, we should utter our voices long and loud in remonstrance against any such measure. If we and our legislators may not politically interfere with slavery in States where it now exists, we may interfere to prevent it from exerting its baleful influence over territory now free. We should do many things for the sake of peace and conciliation. We have heretofore made concessions and compromises — perhaps too many — on this subject; but here is where the people of God, North and South, should make a stand, and declare before heaven and earth, and with an emphasis which cannot be misunderstood, that not another inch of our public domain shall be cursed with slavery for any consideration whatever, if our influence can prevent it. In our remonstrances, we will be respectful, but firm. Let our politicians know that all persons who are governed by Christian principle, through the length and breadth of the land, have taken their position, and that the mountains shall be removed out of their places, ere they will swerve from it, and there will be but little danger of slave extension.

In the third place, we should use every endeavor to disseminate the gospel of Christ, and bring its principles to bear upon all classes of persons, North and South. If we can do this

effectually, it is all sufficient. The Gospel, if faithfully applied, is a sure remedy for every social and moral evil that ever existed. We at the North should demonstrate to our slaveholding friends whom we wish to influence, that we ourselves are governed by its spirit, and actuated by its principle, in all that we do in relation to this subject. It is not ambition, a lust for power, sectional jealousy, a spirit of censoriousness or ill-will, that prompts us to what they have been in the habit of regarding as intermeddling with their affairs, in which we have no concern, but a spirit of love,—love not less to them than to their slaves. And then, in the temper of Christ, we will bring the Gospel to bear on the slaveholder's conscience and sense of justice. We will hold up and keep before his mind the great rule of life given by Him who spake as never man spake,—“Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them.” Let this rule be once adopted and carried out, and it is enough. Human beings would no more be sold as beasts in the market, and driven to unrequited toil; the minds of men would no longer be kept in ignorance; the domestic circle would never again be invaded by the hand of sordid avarice separating husbands and wives, parents and children, doing savage violence

to the noblest affections of our nature; the Bible would be put into the hands of every slave, and he would be taught to read it; common schools and Sabbath schools would be everywhere established and maintained, as well for the slave as for the white child; the master would regard those whom he now holds as property as his own brethren, going with him to the same judgment, and destined finally to dwell with him as his equals, in the same heaven, and to wear as bright crowns and sing as rapturous a song as he. He would immediately set himself about preparing his slaves for emancipation, and for the enjoyment of those natural rights, of which they have for so long a time been most unjustly deprived. In short, slavery, as the term is now understood, would cease instantly, and a kind, parental guardianship would take its place, and every southern plantation would be transformed into a moral garden of beauty and happiness, and universal and entire emancipation would follow with the least possible delay. And, finally, we should if possible bring the Gospel to bear upon the great body politic, upon our presidents, our governors, our National and State legislators. It would seem that some of our law-makers are much better acquainted with Blackstone and Vattel, than they are with the Lord

Jesus Christ, or they would not disgrace our statute-books with laws which ignore the "higher laws" of God. We should often remind them that this is a Christian, and not a heathen or infidel republic; and that every enactment, not consistent with the gospel of Christ and inalienable human rights, does violence to the Christian sentiment and Christian conscience of the nation, and must be repealed. If they will not hear us, we have only to appoint more faithful servants, who will do as they are told. We have no idea of "uniting church and state," but to infuse as much of the Gospel into the state as possible is both a privilege and duty; and when all our affairs and institutions, public, domestic, and private, are administered on gospel principles, we shall become a free, prosperous, and happy people, and not till then.

And now, may God bless you, my dear brother, and guide you, and guide us all, to pursue such a course in regard to the three and a half millions of slaves in our professedly free republic as will afford us the most satisfaction when we meet them as our equals at the judgment-seat of Christ.

With high esteem and much affection,

I remain your Christian brother,

A. C. BALDWIN.

AN ESSAY,

BY

REV. TIMOTHY WILLISTON.

IS AMERICAN SLAVERY AN INSTITUTION WHICH CHRISTIANITY
SANCTIONS, AND WILL PERPETUATE? AND, IN VIEW
OF THIS SUBJECT, WHAT OUGHT AMERICAN
CHRISTIANS TO DO, AND REFRAIN
FROM DOING ?

Homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto. — **TERENCE.**
Bear ye one another's burdens. — **PAUL.**

ESSAY.

A GREAT moral question is, in this nineteenth century, being tried before the church of Christ, and at the bar of public sentiment. It is, Whether the system of servitude known as American slavery be a system whose perpetuity is compatible with pure Christianity? Whether, with the Bible in her hand, the church may lawfully indorse, participate in, and help perpetuate, this system? Or whether, on the other hand, the system be, in its origin, nature, and workings, intrinsically evil; a thing which, if, like concubinage and polygamy, God has indeed tolerated in his church, he never approved of; and which, in the progress of a pure Christianity, must inevitably become extinct? I feel assured that the latter of these propositions will, without argument, command the assent of the mass of living

Christians. But there are those in the church who array themselves on the other side. While they would not justify the least inhumanity in the treatment of slaves, they profess to believe that slavery itself has the approbation of Jehovah, and may with propriety be perpetuated in the church and the world. At their hands I would respectfully solicit a patient hearing, while I proceed to assign several reasons for differing with them in opinion.

First. Slavery is a condition of society not founded in nature. When God, in his Word, demands that children shall be in subordination to their parents, and citizens to the constituted civil authorities, we need no why and wherefore to enable us to see the reasonableness of these requirements. We feel that they are no arbitrary enactments, but indispensable to the best interests of families and of society, and therefore founded in nature. We are prepared, too, from their obvious necessity and utility, to rank them among the permanent statutes of the Divine Legislator. But can as much be said of slavery? Is there such an obvious fitness and utility in one man's being, against his will, owned and controlled by another, as to prepare us to say that such an ownership is founded in the very constitution of things? None will pretend that

there is. Not only is slavery not founded in nature, but,

Second. It is condemned by the very instincts of our moral constitution. These instincts seem to whisper that "all men are born free and equal;" equal, not in intellect, or in the petty distinctions of parentage, property, or power; but having, as the creatures of one God, an equal right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Job's moral instincts taught him, that the fact of all men's having one and the same Creator gave his servants a right to contend with him, when wronged; and that, if he "despised their cause," he must answer it to his God and theirs. That men of all races and grades are essentially equal before God; that every man has a right to himself, to the fruits of his toil, and to the unmolested pursuit of happiness, in all lawful ways; and hence, that slavery, as existing in these States, is a gigantic system of evil and wrong,—are truths which the moral sense of men is everywhere proclaiming with much emphasis and distinctness. If it be not so, what means this note of remonstrance, long and loud, that comes to our ears over the Atlantic wave? Why else did a Mohammedan prince,* (to say nothing of what nearly all Chris-

* Mehemet Ali.

tian governments have done,) put an end to slavery in his dominions before he died? And how else shall we account for that moral earthquake which has for years been rocking this great republic to its very centre? One cannot thoughtfully observe the signs of the times,—no, nor the workings of his own heart, methinks,—without perceiving that slavery is at war with the moral sense of mankind. If there be any conscience that approves, it must be a conscience perverted by wrong instruction, or by a vicious practice. And can that be a good institution, and worthy of perpetuity, which an unperverted conscience instinctively condemns?

Third. The bad character of slavery becomes yet more apparent, if we consider the manner in which it has chiefly originated and been sustained. Did God institute the relation of master and slave, as he did the conjugal and parental relations? It is not pretended. In what, then, did slavery have its beginning? Doubtless the first slaves were captives, taken in war. In primitive ages, the victors in war were considered as having a right to do what they pleased with their captives; and so it sometimes happened that they were put to death, and sometimes that they were made to serve their captors as bondmen. Thus slavery was at first the incidental result of war.

But as time rolled on, the love of power and of gain prompted men to make aggressions on their weaker neighbors, for the very purpose of enslaving them ; and, eventually, man-stealing and the slave-trade became familiar facts in the world's history. Upon these has slavery, for centuries past, depended mainly for its continuance. And, although these feeders of slavery are now by Christian nations branded as piracy and strictly vetoed, they are far from being exterminated. Indeed, it seems to be well understood, that, if all commerce in slaves, foreign and domestic, ceases, slavery itself must soon become extinct.

[Now if man-stealing be an act which the Word of God and the moral instincts of men do most pointedly condemn, — and I will attempt no demonstration of this here, — what shall we say of that which is its legitimate offspring and dependant ? Far be it from me to affirm, that, circumstanced as our southern brethren are, it is just as criminal for them to hold slaves as it would be to go now to Africa and forcibly seize them. But, in the spirit of love, I would ask my slaveholding brother, Can that be a justifiable institution, and deserving to be upheld, which has so bad a parentage ? “ Do men gather grapes of thorns ? ” “ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? ”]

Fourth. There are, in the Scriptures, many clear indications that slavery has not the approbation of God, and hence has not the stamp of perpetuity upon it. Under this head, let us notice several distinct particulars.

1. Had God regarded servitude as a good thing, he would not, in authoritatively predicting its existence, have said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." What God visits men with as a curse cannot be intrinsically good and beneficial.

2. The judgments with which God visited Egypt and her proud monarch, for refusing to emancipate the Israelites, and for essaying to recapture them, when let go, and the wages which he caused his people, when released, to receive for their hitherto unrequited toils, clearly evince that he has no complacency in compulsory, unrewarded servitude.

3. The same thing is indicated by the fact that God has, by statute, provided expressly for the protection and freedom of an escaped slave; but not for the recovery of such a fugitive by his master. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he shall choose. . . . Thou shalt not oppress him."

Now be it, if you will, that this statute had reference only to servants who should escape into the land of Israel from Gentile masters ; does it not indicate a strong bias, in the mind of God, to the side of freedom, rather than that of slavery ? And does it not establish the point, that, in God's estimation, one man cannot rightfully be deemed the property of another man ? Were it otherwise, would not the Jew have been required to restore a runaway to his pursuing master, just as he was to restore any other lost thing which its owner should come in search of ? Or, to say the least, would not the Israelites have been allowed to reduce to servitude among themselves the escaped slave of a heathen master ? But how unlike all this are the actual requirements of the statute. God's people must neither deliver up the fugitive nor enslave him themselves ; but allow him to dwell among them as a FREEMAN, just "where it liketh him best." And, in this connection, how significant a fact is it, that the Bible nowhere empowers the master from whom a slave had escaped to pursue, seize, and drag back to bondage that escaped slave.

4. That which constitutes the grand fountain of slavery, — the forcible, stealthy seizure of a man, for the purpose of holding or selling him as a slave, — was, under the Mosaic dispensation,

punishable with death ; and is, in the New Testament, named in connection with the most heinous crimes. "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." What could more forcibly exhibit God's disapprobation of one of the distinctive features of slavery, — compulsion ? What more impressively show the value that he puts upon a man's personal independence, — his right to himself ? Now if God doomed that man to die a felon's death who should steal and sell a fellow man, can it be that he would hold him guiltless who should buy the stolen man, knowing him to have been stolen ? God's people were, indeed, allowed to "buy bondmen and bondmaids" of the strangers that dwelt among them, and of the surrounding heathen. But were they ever allowed to buy persons whom they knew to have been unlawfully obtained, and offered for sale in manifest opposition to their own wishes ? If they were not, — and, from the statute just referred to, it seems certain that they were not, — does American slavery derive countenance from that which was tolerated in the Jewish church and nation ? True, the slaves now held as such among us were not themselves feloniously seized on a foreign soil, torn away from kindred, homes, and country, and sold into hopeless bondage in a

strange land; but their sires and grandsires were. Man-stealing is confessedly the stock out of which has sprung, and grown to its present dimensions, the vast and overshadowing Upas of American slavery; and if the Bible brands that stock as pestiferous, must not the entire tree partake of the noxious influence? Again: if, as competent critics assert, the popular sense of the word rendered "men-stealers," in 1 Tim. i. 10, be "those who deal in men — literally, slave-traders," then trafficking in slaves for mercenary ends is, by Paul, ranked among vices the most abominable; and American slavery is, if possible, more pointedly condemned by that passage than by the statute found in Ex. xxi. 16. For who does not know that trading in "the persons of men" has ever been, and yet is, a main pillar in the fabric of slavery? Indeed, man-stealing and slave-trading are to slave-holding precisely what the business of the distiller and of the vendor is to the vice of intemperance. There is, in either case, a trio of associated evils; and it is difficult to say which member of either trio is the most repulsive and harmful.

○ If, now, it be objected to this argument from the Bible, that the Mosaic institutes expressly recognize such a thing as involuntary servitude, and prescribe rules for its regulation, I answer:

true, but the servitude thus recognized and regulated by statute was of a far milder type than that which is legalized in these American States. For, 1. It allowed the bondman a large amount of leisure, or time which he need not devote to his master's service; 2. It made it possible for him to accumulate a considerable amount of property; 3. It placed him on a perfect level with his master, in regard to religious privileges; 4. It gave him his freedom whenever he should be so chastised as to result in permanent injury to his person: thus operating as a powerful preventive of inhumanity in chastising; 5. It respected the sanctity of the conjugal and parental relations, when existing among bondmen, and did not authorize a compulsory severing of family ties; 6. It made no provision for the sale of a servant by his Jewish master, nor for any such domestic commerce in the persons of men as is practised in the southern States of this Union; 7. It provided for the periodical emancipation of all that were in bondage; thus aiming a fatal blow at the very existence of servitude in the Hebrew commonwealth. I may not, consistently with the necessary brevity of a tract designed for popular perusal, go into any demonstration of the facts above asserted. For proof that they are facts, let my readers studiously examine

the Mosaic books, and the Rev. A. Barnes's "Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery." I see not how any candid and discriminating investigator can help being convinced that the servitude which was temporarily tolerated in the Jewish church, was, in numerous respects, very unlike to that which exists among us, and far less repulsive.

But suppose, for argument's sake, it had been just as repulsive a system as ours, would the fact of its having been tolerated under the Jewish economy prove it to be intrinsically good, and worthy of being perpetuated? Then, by parity of reasoning, the good men of ancient times might safely have concluded that certain other practices were good and would endure, which we know were not good, and were not to last. Had the question been propounded in Abraham's or in David's day, whether polygamy and concubinage were approved of God, and would be perpetuated in the church, it is probable that even the saints of those periods would have responded affirmatively. The fact that God had so long allowed his people to practise these things unrebuked, might, to them, have seemed sufficient proof that these practices were intrinsically proper, and were to rank among the permanent fixtures of human society. But were Abraham

and David now on the earth, with what changed feelings would they regard the cast-off system of concubinage and a plurality of wives. Again: suppose the conjecture had been hazarded, three thousand years ago, that woman, from being a menial drudge, or a mere medium of bestial indulgence, would one day occupy the dignified position to which Christianity has actually lifted her, would not incredulity have lurked in every heart, and found expression on every tongue? Now there are plain indications, not only in the Word, but the providences of God, that he never regarded slavery with complacency, any more than he did polygamy, concubinage, or the serfdom of woman; and that he never designed its perpetuity. Scrutinizing that Word and those providences, one needs no prophetic ken to enable him to predict with certainty, that, when Christ's millennial reign is ushered in, contraband will be inscribed on slavery, as it already has been on some other evils that were once tolerated, not only in society, but in the church of God.

But I shall be reminded here, that, when the apostles were disseminating Christianity in the Roman empire, there prevailed throughout that empire a system of slavery more odious and oppressive than ours; and yet that both slaveholders and slaves were converted and admitted

to the church, without its affecting the relation of master and slave; that the New Testament instructs the parties how to demean themselves in that relation, but nowhere enjoins emancipation on the master, or encourages absconding or non-submission in the slave; in short, that it nowhere expressly condemns slavery, or intimates that its extermination was to be expected or desired. In reply to this, I would say, —

(1.) To infer, because the New Testament enjoins obedience on slaves, and makes no direct attack on the institution of slavery, that it therefore sanctions the institution, and would have it perpetuated, is as much a *non sequitur* as to infer, because God enjoins on men subjection to existing civil authorities, whatever may be their character, that he as much approves of a despotic as of a constitutional government,—of the government of Ferdinand of Naples as of that of Victoria of England. Nor is it more difficult to comprehend why God has, in the Scriptures, made no direct assault on slavery, than it is to see why He has not directly assailed governmental despotisms, or expressed any preference for one form of government over another. An obvious and far-seeing wisdom is discernible in this, which it behooves us to admire, and not unfrequently to imitate. Had the apostles or

the Scriptures openly denounced all absolutism, whether civil or domestic, it would have aroused unnecessary prejudice and opposition, and diverted the attention of men from the grand object aimed at in giving the world a written and preached gospel. God deemed it wiser to reach these evils through the slow but sure progress of certain great principles laid down in his Word, than through the medium of specific prohibitions.

(2.) The fact that the apostles received into the church converts who not only held slaves, but held them under a slave-system that was awfully despotic, was no indorsement on their part of that odious system, nor even of the slightest inhumanity on the part of a master towards his slaves. It does, indeed, prove that a man may be a Christian, without ceasing to be a slaveholder in form; but not that a master may indulge in all the legal barbarities of the system, and yet be a Christian. Merely to sustain the relation of a Christian master for the good of the slave, or from the necessity of the case, is one thing, while to advocate and defend this chattel system, and hold in bondage fellow human beings for personal and selfish ends, is quite another thing. Nowhere do the Scriptures countenance, or even wink at, the least degree

of inhumanity or injustice in the treatment of servants. So far from this, they expressly enjoin it on masters to "give unto their servants that which is just and equal," all the law of disinterested love would require ; accompanying the injunction with the significant hint, that they themselves have a Master, and that with him there is "no respect of persons."

(3.) Though the Scriptures do not directly assail the system of slavery, they indirectly and obviously condemn it, and that very abundantly. Slavery is indirectly and yet strongly rebuked in such passages of Scripture as the following: "Wo unto him that useth his neighbor's service without wages." "Is not this the fast that I have chosen, ... to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy?" "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" "And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; that they should seek the Lord." "God is no respecter of persons." "The people of the land have used oppression, ... therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

“Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” It needs no unusual acuteness to see, that, were the spirit of these and kindred passages (for numerous others of the sort might have been cited) everywhere acted out, slavery would as readily vanish, as do the icebergs of the North, if perchance they float away into milder latitudes.

Fifth. To the four reasons already assigned for thinking that slavery has not God’s approbation, and ought not to be perpetuated, I will add but one more,—its baleful effects. (1). As it respects worldly thrift, or pecuniary prosperity. It is a fact, that slavery exerts a depressing influence on the business welfare of any community where it prevails; and that, other things being equal, slaveholding States can never compete with free ones in the item of financial prosperity. A necessary brevity forbids my pointing out the causes of this fact; but my readers will, without my aid, readily ascertain what they are. Suffice it to say, it has become a settled maxim of political economy, that there exists an antagonism between slavery and the highest business prosperity of any people that tolerates it; and the southern States of this Union furnish abundant confirmation of its truth. (2.) I will name but one other thing,—its

baneful influence on character and morals. That slavery tends to debase the character and morals of the slaves will scarcely be questioned. Apart from the ignorance naturally resulting from their condition, that condition powerfully tends to render them sensual, indolent, artful, mendacious, stealthful, and revengeful. But is the bad moral tendency of the institution limited to the bondmen? Exerts it no corrupting influence on the hearts, the habits, and morals of the masters? Is it not its legitimate tendency to foster in them such vices as indolence, effeminacy, licentiousness, covetousness, inhumanity, haughtiness, and a supreme regard for self? Of course, I do not affirm that it uniformly produces these sad effects on the character of masters. So far from this, there may doubtless be found slaveholders, who, in all that adorns and ennobles human character, will compare favorably with the very best men at the North. I think it will be conceded, however, that the legitimate tendency is to evil, and that the effects of slavery on the character of its sustainers are, in the main, disastrous; and that the depreciated state of morals prevailing where slavery exists is mainly attributable to this as its source. I need not here enter into detail. Facts are too well known to make this necessary.

Thus have we contemplated several distinct reasons for believing that slavery is no good thing,—has not the sanction of Jehovah,—and cannot with propriety be perpetuated. Its contrariety to nature,—its antagonism to the moral sense of mankind,—its disgraceful parentage and manner of support,—its condemnation by the Bible,—and its disastrous influence on financial prosperity, on character, and on public morals,—all proclaim that slavery, so far from being a good thing, is a tremendous curse; yea, more, that it is a stupendous wrong; and hence, that it should be tolerated in the church of Christ no longer than the best interests of all concerned may render necessary for a safe termination.

But it may be, after all, that I have failed to secure the assent of some of my southern brethren to the justness of the foregoing positions and inferences. It may be that they still regard the system of bondage prevailing in their midst as in the main beneficial, defensible from the Bible, and, with some modifications perhaps, worthy of perpetuity. Well, brethren, suppose you do thus regard it; and for argument's sake suppose, too, that you may possibly be right,—that slave-holding may be in itself the harmless thing which you deem it; ought you not cheer-

fully to abandon it, in obedience to a great Bible principle, — that of refraining from things which are in themselves lawful, or which your conscience may not condemn, out of regard to the conscience of aggrieved Christian brethren, or to the prejudices of those whose salvation you would not obstruct? You are aware, brethren, that this magnanimous principle Paul both inculcated and exemplified. You are also aware that a large majority of the Christians now living regard your cherished institution as unjustifiable, and at variance with the spirit of Christianity; and, so regarding it, they long for its extinction, and are grieved with you for cleaving to it so tenaciously, and refusing to concert measures for its ultimate overthrow. Indeed, they are more than grieved; they are profoundly agitated by the fresh developments of the iniquitous system which you are helping to uphold; and there seems no prospect, while that system endures, of their becoming tranquillized. A tempest has sprung up and is raging in the church of Christ, — to say nothing of the civilized world, — which seems not likely to cease till its cause be removed; and slavery is that cause. Now I put it to you, brethren, if here be not an opportunity of exemplifying, on a broad scale, the self-denying and noble principle which Paul

indicates in the words, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient;" "Eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience' sake: . . . conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other;" "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." Have it, if you will, that the brethren for whose sake you are asked to make this sacrifice are weak brethren, and their consciences weak. Your obligation to make it is none the less on that account; for the principle just adverted to contemplates cases of this very sort. Since the practice which grieves these weak brethren is one that you can probably abandon without wounding your own conscience, are you at liberty to undervalue their conscience by persisting in that which grieves them?

But how much weightier does this argument become, when it is remembered that the opposers of slavery, besides being exceedingly numerous, have, many of them, been eminent,—not merely for a conscientious piety, but for talent, for research, for scholarship, for broad and comprehensive views of things;—and that the list embraces distinguished southern, as well as northern men; and men of celebrity in both church and state. There have been found

in the anti-slavery ranks, presidents and noble men, jurists and legislators, statesmen and divines, scholars and authors, poets and orators. And, still further to enhance the dignity of the cause, it should be remembered that several General Assemblies of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, together with numerous lesser ecclesiastical bodies, have lifted up their voice in opposition to slavery, and proclaimed substantially the same views which this humble Essay has aimed to exhibit. Now if, as we have seen, a deferential regard should be had to the conscience of aggrieved Christian brethren, even when they are few and feeble-minded, how much more, when the aggrieved ones are counted in hundreds of thousands? when theirs is an intelligent piety and an enlightened conscience? and when, too, their remonstrance is backed up by a public sentiment that is wellnigh unanimous through all christendom?

If now, in spite of all these considerations, I still have readers that say in their hearts, slavery must be perpetuated, they will pardon me for lingering no longer in the hope of changing their views. I would be indulged, however, in one parting interrogation. Has it never occurred to you, brethren, that yours is, on some accounts, a very unfavorable stand-point from which to

form just and disinterested views of slavery; and that your very position as slave-holders, and your long familiarity with the system and its evils, may have blinded you to the magnitude of those evils, and to the great desirableness of their being removed? May it not be that long use, and self-interest, and the love of power and ease, have conspired to warp your judgment, blunt your sensibilities, and cause you to view slavery through a deceptive medium?

Having, as I hope, the cordial assent of the great mass of my readers, northern and southern, to the foregoing argument against slavery and its perpetuity, we are now prepared to advance to the last great division of our subject, and to inquire: What are the duties, positive and negative, which this subject imposes on American Christians? What does it demand that we, as Christians, should do, and refrain from doing? This question subdivides itself thus: What ought we northern and professedly anti-slavery Christians to do, and not do? And, next, What duties, positive and negative, does the question devolve on professing Christians in the slave-holding States?

I. We are to consider what we, the northern and avowedly anti-slavery section of the American church, ought, in view of this subject, both

to do, and refrain from doing. In reply to the question, What ought we to do? I would say,—

1. It is not only our right, but duty, temperately and with Christian courtesy to continue to discuss this great theme, both orally and with the pen; and especially to endeavor to bring the truth into contact with the mind and heart of our southern brethren,—if, peradventure, we may thus persuade them soon to cease their connection with slavery. Freedom of discussion is one important safeguard of the public weal; and that must be regarded as a bad, untenable cause which will not bear the test of a full and free discussion before the world. Free inquiry, too, has not only preceded all great reformation, but has been an important instrument in bringing them about. That great moral change known as the temperance reformation is but one example among many that might be adduced. If slavery is ever to be numbered in history among the things that are past, it will be by having Bible light and truth made to converge upon it, through the lens of free public discussion. Hence, believing as we do that American slavery is an enormous evil and a gigantic wrong,—a thing with which the church should cease to have connection as speedily as may be,—as Christians we may, we must, employ our tongues and our

pens in behalf of the enslaved, till our world shall cease to contain such a class of men.

2. We ought so to exercise the right of suffrage as to resist the extension of slavery beyond its present limits. I say nothing here of the political question of State rights, or of interfering with slavery in States where it now exists. The question of authorizing by law the extension of slavery into new States and Territories, or of admitting new States with pro-slavery constitutions, is another and very different thing from that of disturbing the compact in relation to slavery entered into by the founders of this republic. The concessions in relation to the slave interest which our fathers made by no means oblige us to make further concessions, by consenting that slavery shall overstep her present geographical limits. I know not what others may think; but, for one, I feel constrained, by a sense of duty to God and my country, so to vote as to have my votes tell against the spread of slavery. I must carry my Christian principles of love and humanity to the ballot-box, as well as elsewhere. Though long identified with one of the political parties, I have of late felt myself bound, as a voter, to ignore the ancient party lines, and even to ignore all other questions, compared with the one great and absorbing one, Shall slavery be

allowed to have more territory, in which to breed and expand itself? In my deliberate judgment, all Christian patriots should, so far as their votes can speak, say to the system of bondage existing in our midst, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." This becomes now a moral and a religious duty.

(3.) In our visits to the throne of grace, we ought, with more frequency and fervor, "to remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Assured that all hearts and events are at God's disposal, that he abhors oppression, and that prayer is the Christian's mode of taking hold of God's strength, we must make full proof of this as a weapon with which to effect the subversion of slavery. It may be that importunate, persevering prayer will effect more in behalf of the enslaved than all other instrumentalities. It is, at least, quite certain that other means will prove inefficacious, if this be not superadded.

But the question we are considering has a negative as well as positive side; and we will next inquire, what we anti-slavery Christians ought to refrain from doing.

1. We must not, in our efforts to subvert slavery, indulge in an unchristian spirit, or in language adapted needlessly to anger and alienate

those whom it should be our aim to win. A cause that is intrinsically good may be advocated in a bad spirit, or with improper weapons; and such may have sometimes been the case with ours. Would that all men had ever borne it in mind, that truth and love are the only weapons with which to wage a successful conflict with this or any other deep-seated moral evil.

2. We must not, in our zeal for emancipation, allow mere feeling or benevolent impulses partially to dethrone reason; and thus disqualify ourselves for taking impartial views of the subject, or for accurately discriminating between truth and error. There may have been men in the anti-slavery ranks, with whom sympathy was every thing, and reason — and even the Bible — comparatively nothing. In obeying the injunction to “remember them that are in bonds,” they may have neglected to remember any thing else. Slavery seemed to occupy their entire field of vision. Hence, not fully informed in regard to the actual condition of things at the South, they have erroneously supposed that the slave codes prevailing there were the standard by which to judge of the actual condition of the slaves, and that all the Southern church was actually practising the barbarities authorized by those codes. As there was no just appreciation

of the actual conduct of masters towards their servants, so there was no allowance made for the circumstances which conspired to render them masters, nor for the obstacles which stand in the way of their ceasing to be masters. It must be admitted, that generally, where unrighteous laws are suffered to exist, the mass of the community will not be better than the laws; but there are exceptions, — men who intend to give heed to a higher law. So much for allowing an amiable but blind sympathy to usurp that throne which reason and revelation were designed conjointly to occupy. It scarcely need be added, that these ultraisms have done much to prejudice the anti-slavery cause, and bring it, in the eyes of some, into unmerited contempt. We must wipe away that reproach, by so conducting our warfare with slavery as to evince that we are neither men of one idea, nor men whose judgment is led captive by their sensibilities.

3. We must not, in opposing slavery, indorse the sentiment, that one cannot in any conceivable circumstances give credible evidence of piety, and yet continue in form to hold slaves; that being a master is, in any and in all circumstances, a disciplinable offence in the church; or that it should, without exception, constitute a barrier

to church-membership, or to the communion of saints at Christ's sacramental board. While we believe that all the great principles of God's Word go to subvert slavery, and while we are constrained to regard the holding of slaves as diminishing the evidence of a man's piety, and thus far alienating his claims to a good standing in the Christian church, we may nevertheless make exceptions, and not keep a man out of the church, or discipline him when in it, merely because he sustains temporarily the relation of master, not for selfish ends, but, as in rare cases, for benevolent reasons. But if a man defends the system, and takes away from a fellow man inalienable human rights, then we may and should refuse him admission, or subject him to discipline, as the case may be. But, obvious and important as is this distinction, it is one which some anti-slavery men may have failed to make ; and that failure may have prejudiced or retarded the cause of emancipation. A good cause suffers by having a single uncandid statement or untenable argument advanced in its support ; and the friends of the enslaved must afford their opponents no room for saying, that their reasonings are illogical or anti-scriptural.

4. We must not, in seeking the extinction of

American slavery, so insist on its immediate abolition as to repudiate the responsibility which a master owes to this dependent and depressed class of his fellow beings; but that that end be kept steadily in view, to be accomplished as speedily as is consistent with the best good of the parties concerned. The immediate and total extinction of southern slavery, if not obviously impossible, is of questionable expediency. The upas of American slavery has struck its roots so deep, and shot its branches so far, and so interlaced itself with all surrounding objects, that, to have it instantaneously and unreservedly uprooted, might prove, in many cases, disastrous; and, at all events, is not to be expected. To say nothing of other obstacles to the immediate abolition of Southern slavery, the highest good of many of the slaves makes it inexpedient. Some, probably many of them, need to pass through an educating process, — a kind of mental and moral apprenticeship, — in order to their profiting largely by the boon of emancipation.*

* The publishers understand the writer to mean, that the working of them without wages, — the withholding that which is just and equal, — should be immediately and universally abandoned, and that emancipation should be granted as speedily as the slaves can be prepared to use and

II. We are now to inquire, lastly, what duties, positive and negative, this great question devolves on those Christians among whom American slavery has its seat, or who are personally identified with it. Hoping, brethren, that the sentiments thus far advanced are your sentiments, I shall have your further assent when I say,

1. That the extinction, at the earliest consistent date, of the system of servitude existing among you, is a result at which you ought steadily and strenuously to aim. And, as you see, we base this obligation of yours, not on the assumption of any sinfulness which you may sustain to slavery, but on the acknowledged injustice and woes, past, present, and prospective, of the system as a system, — its contrariety, as a system, to the fundamental principles of Christianity. Did we regard you as necessarily sinners,

enjoy their freedom. The right should be acknowledged, and the needful means for its security immediately used. The writer does not say, that holding men in bondage is not generally sinful, nor that all sin should not be immediately repented of and forsaken, but only that there may be exceptions where for a time, and under very peculiar circumstances, it may not be sinful, and cannot consistently with the greatest good be abandoned, without some previous means of preparation.

if in any sense you hold slaves, then the least we could ask of you would be, that with contrition of heart you should instantaneously cease to indulge in this sin, for all sin should be immediately abandoned. As it is, we only ask, that, just as fast as your slaves can be prepared for freedom, and as the providence of God may put it in your power to liberate them, you will do so. We are not so unwise as to expect that the work of extinction can be accomplished in a day. We know, too, that you are not, in your church capacity, the constituted arbiters of the question as a question of State policy. And, so long as your legislatures and their constituencies are resolved on maintaining the system, perhaps you will be unable to effect as much as you desire in the way of promoting its overthrow. And yet, brethren, there is a way in which we think you can, with entire safety and manifest propriety, contribute largely and directly to the extinction of American slavery. Would the entire Southern church cease all personal participation in slavery, and throw her whole weight and influence into the scale of slavery's complete subversion, that "consummation devoutly to be wished" would soon ensue. Slave-holding, no longer practised or justified by the church, but discountenanced, could not long retain its foothold in the State. Now if this be

so, our slaveholding brethren will confess that they are imperiously bound, by motives of Christian duty, to liberate their bondmen with all consistent speed. Meantime, and as one important means of qualifying them for freedom, you ought,

2. To see to it that not only your own, but all the bondmen among you, — your entire slave population, — are furnished with the Bible, and qualified to read and comprehend it; and also with stated preaching. They need a written and preached gospel, were it only to fit them to exchange, with advantage, a state of vassalage for the dignity of freemen; for all experience proves that the Bible and the pulpit are of all instruments the best to qualify men safely to exercise the right of self-government. But there is a servitude more dreadful by far than any domestic bondage that men have ever groaned under; and your slaves need the Bible, and the Bible preached, to prove God's instruments of breaking the chains imposed by Satan, and making them Christ's freemen. Before God and in prospect of eternity, the distinctions between the master and his slave dwindle into insignificance. Having souls that are alike impure and alike precious, alike remembered by a dying Saviour and alike in need of the

regenerating change, they stand alike in need of God's Word, written and preached, as the Spirit's instrument in renewing and sanctifying the soul. Hence the Bible and preaching are as much the rightful inheritance of the slave as of the master. We rejoice that these truths and the obligations resulting therefrom are, to some extent, recognized by southern Christians; and that, in spite of certain adverse statutes, so much is being done there for the spiritual well-being of the slaves. Go on, brethren, in the good work of evangelizing your slave population; in teaching them the art of reading and the rudiments of knowledge; in putting the Bible into their hands, and affording them stated opportunities to read it, and to hear it expounded by you and by Christ's ministers. Go on, we say, till there be not one southern slave, who, in point of religious privileges, is not on a footing of equality with yourselves. Prosecuting this laudable work in the spirit of love, you will probably encounter no serious opposition. The adverse but dead statutes referred to will not, we hope, be galvanized into life, in order to oppose you.

It only remains that we name a few things, which we trust our Southern brethren will unite with us in saying that they should refrain from

doing. (1.) You ought not to, and we trust you will not, betray impatience and irritation, whenever we of the North attempt to press the claims of the enslaved on your attention. Your doing this,—as you sometimes have,—seems to indicate, that, in your opinion, we Northern Christians have no responsibility in regard to slavery and its evils; and that when we discuss this theme we make ourselves “busybodies in other men’s matters.” To the justness of this opinion we cannot subscribe. While we disclaim all right or intention to break our compact with you as States, we feel that American slavery is a question of too great moment to ourselves and to unborn generations for us to have no concern with or responsibility for; and as patriots, as philanthropists, as Christians, we are constrained to do all that we rightfully may for the downfall of this hoary system of wrong and woe. If any of you differ with us in opinion on this theme, we trust you will allow us to discuss it to our heart’s content; and that you will listen to our reasonings with Christian meekness and candor. Not to do so will be construed as an evidence of intrinsic weakness in your cause.

(2.) You will freely admit, we presume, that certain practices are authorized by your slave laws, in which you must not indulge even so

long as by any necessity you hold slaves. Your slave codes, for example, do not recognize the sanctity of family ties and the domestic affections as existing among slaves; but, as Christian masters, you must. You doubtless believe, as do we, that the marriage relation, with all its rights and immunities, was as much designed for the negro as for the white man; that he, as truly as the other, is entitled to "cleave unto his wife," unexposed to the danger of man's putting asunder what God hath so closely joined, that "they are no more twain, but one flesh." You believe, too, that God united husband and wife thus indissolubly, not simply that they might be a help and solace to each other in the toilsome pilgrimage of life, but that the children with which God should bless them might grow up under their supervision, and by them be qualified for a career of usefulness and honor. Thus you believe, and believing thus, you will not, we trust, counteract God's benevolent designs, by countenancing, in your own practice, the separation of husbands and wives, or of parents and their offspring. We feel assured, that, whatever your laws may allow, or non-professing masters around you may do, you will never ignore the conjugal or parental rights of your servants, or indulge in any thing adapted to

mar their domestic enjoyment. Were you to do so, we confess we could not extend to you "the right hand of fellowship" as brethren in Christ. Were a church-member of ours to practise thus, we should regard him as amenable to discipline. We should also regard it as disciplinable for a master to overwork, or brutally chastise, or but half feed and clothe his servants; or to hold slaves for mere purposes of gain, or to traffic in them. None of these inhumanities could we reconcile with the obligations of a Christian profession; and we confidently hope that in these views you will heartily concur, and that with them your practice will correspond.

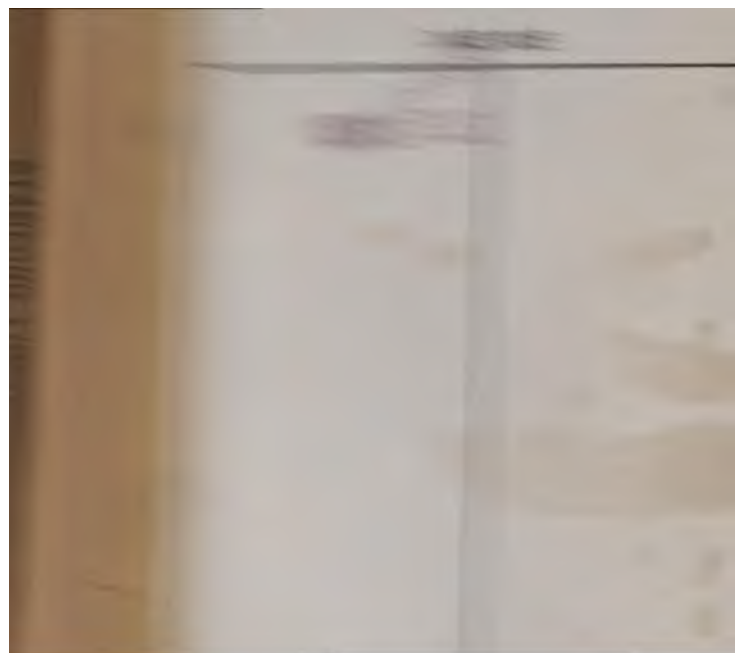
Christian brethren of the North and the South! The question we have been considering is one of vast moment. Upon the right disposition of it are suspended, under God, interests of immeasurable value, and which stretch far out into the unseen future of our country and the world. Coming ages and unborn generations are to be affected, favorably or otherwise, by the decision of this vexed question; and, brethren, unless I misjudge, its right decision is, to a very great extent, lodged in our hands. As decides the American church, so, methinks, will decide the American people. And now, — may I confess it? — I have dared to hope that the sentiments

of this Essay are not only sound, but in unison with the views of the great mass of American Christians. Are we not agreed in this: that American slavery is a system of deep injustice and wrong, not sanctioned by the Word or the providence of God; fraught with incalculable mischief to the interests of both masters, and slaves, and to the social and religious well-being of our whole country; a blot on the escutcheon both of the nation and of the church; a weapon for scepticism to wield, and an obstacle to the introduction of millennial glory; and hence, a system which ought speedily to terminate, and which all good men should unitedly oppose and seek to subvert? If we are thus agreed, let us join hands as well as hearts, and, swerving neither to the extreme of passive indifference on the one hand nor to that of erratic fanaticism on the other, in the majesty of principle let us move calmly onward, a phalanx of Christian philanthropists, attempting naught but what they are assured God would have them attempt, and employing only such means as are warranted by an enlightened conscience. Leaning prayerfully on Him who hears the sighing of the oppressed, let us push vigorously forward, and, though the year of jubilee has not yet fully come, be assured it will come,—that proud day, when not only

“throughout all the land,” but throughout the civilized world, liberty shall be proclaimed “unto all the inhabitants thereof.” Hasten its advent, “O Thou that hearest prayer,” and that “delightest in mercy!” Amen and Amen.







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